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Shaping Authority

How Did a Person Become an Authority
in Antiquity, the Middle Ages
and the Renaissance?

edited by

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JOHAN LEEMANS - BRIGITTE MEIJNS

WHY ARE SOME GREATER
THAN OTHERS?
ACTORS AND FACTORS SHAPING
THE AUTHORITY OF PERSONS
FROM ANTIQUITY
TO THE RENAISSANCE

The cultural and religious history from Antiquity to the Renaissance may be read through the lens of the rise and demise of *auctoritates*. Some of them have retained their aura until today, typically on the basis of their status and personal achievements. But this is only part of the story: one does not become – let alone remain – an authority without the help of others who are assenting and, even more important, actively contributing to such a construction. The chapters in this book deal with the actors and factors that contributed to turning historical persons into *auctoritates* of transhistorical value, as well as with the self-conscious construction of authority by some of the authorities themselves.

A famous passage from the gripping book VIII of Augustine's *Confessions* makes this question more concrete. There we read how a young Augustine and his friends met in August 386 a certain Ponticianus, a devout Christian who had served at the imperial court residing in Trier. Ponticianus told the future bishop of Hippo and his friends about the monastic life that was flourishing at that time in Egypt. He also mentioned the monk Antony as one of the leaders of this monastic movement and vividly explained how two of his friends at Trier had read the *Life of Antony* and how that had changed their life dramatically: they had decided to follow Antony's example and had renounced the world. All of this provoked a torrent of emotions in the young, seeking Augustine. He then runs into the garden, where the famous '*tolle lege*' scene occurs.¹

¹ Augustine 1981, p. 121–132; 1997, p. 197–208.

Before he takes off into the garden, Augustine exclaims in frustration: 'What is happening to us? [...] The untaught are rising up and taking heaven by storm, while we with all our dreary teachings are still groveling in this world of flesh and blood!'.² This entire episode and Augustine's cry from the heart perfectly mirrors two main features of the reception of the monk Antony: he is a rough, uneducated, illiterate holy person *and* he is a leader of Egyptian monasticism. In many liturgical and hagiographical traditions, not to mention modern introductory surveys, Antony is presented as the founder of the eremitic-anachoretic type of monasticism. Often he is juxtaposed to Pachomius as the founder of the cenobitic type. In reality Antony himself and many Egyptian monks with him were far more educated than it may seem.³ Moreover, it is obvious from the sources that Antony was not at all the founder of the monastic movement. Yet, a rich and manifold tradition time and again portrays Antony as its almost illiterate founding father. So, how did the historical Antony become such an *auctoritas*? Undoubtedly, Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, with its Latin and oriental translations and its diverse and lengthy reception history were vital factors.⁴

Antony is the type of person who becomes an *auctoritas* because his or her way of life was considered exemplary. Thanks to the endeavors of contemporaries and later generations, this message was magnified. In this process, he evolved into a model with a very big 'M', a true *auctoritas*. As such, *auctoritates* of this type became part and parcel of a much larger and longer-lasting cultural and intellectual milieu way beyond their own historical context.

Without doing injustice to his ascetical pursuits, Augustine may be considered more as a model of an intellectual *auctoritas*. Already during his lifetime the bishop of Hippo was a leading theologian and intellectual. His major theological treatises (e.g. *De Trinitate* or *De civitate Dei*) demonstrate his formidable creativity and intellect. His letters show his involvement as bishop

² Augustine 1981, p. 125; 1997, p. 199.

³ Groundbreaking in this regard was Rubenson 1995.

⁴ Useful survey of the many images of Antony in Gemeinhardt 2013.

in the affairs of the African Church and beyond. His many other writings demonstrate his involvement in the exchange with non-Christian philosophical currents and intra-Christian movements such as Donatism or Pelagianism. His many hundreds of sermons show him reaching out to influence his hearers' lives as Christians for the better. All of these bear testimony to the bishop of Hippo being already during his lifetime a major church leader and theologian.⁵

Yet, just as in the case of Antony, his reputation as a kind of *auctoritas auctoritatum* developed gradually after his passing in AD 430. As seen in the theological current of neo-augustinianism,⁶ Augustine still inspires diverse reflection. And in the twentieth century virtually no major document was issued by the Roman Catholic Church that does not quote or refer to the bishop of Hippo. In these ranks only Thomas Aquinas can join him.⁷ A most impressive documentation of his influence and *auctoritas* in previous centuries may be found in the *Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, which was recently published in 3 monumental volumes of over 2000 folio-sized pages.⁸ It shows how manifold in topic and widespread across centuries and geographical territory Augustine's influence has been. Augustine is a prime example of an intellectual *auctoritas*. But many other intellectuals *mutatis mutandis* may serve as case-studies.

Thus, after the fascinating and endless cases of 'Antony' and 'Augustine', the chapters in this book will study the mechanisms and strategies by which participants in intellectual life at large have shaped the authority of historical persons. On what basis, why, and how were some persons singled out above their peers as exceptional *auctoritates*, and by which processes did this continue (or discontinue) over time? What were the limits (geographical, literary, etc.) on the development and expansion of a person's

⁵ References to some of the major biographies on the bishop of Hippo may suffice to document all these aspects of Augustine's activity: Brown 2000 [1967]; Lancel 1999.

⁶ For a critical assessment of contemporary Neo-Augustinianism, see Boeve, Lamberigts & Wisse 2009.

⁷ With regard to social thought, this claim is substantiated in Matz 2008.

⁸ Pollmann 2013.

auctoritas? Which circumstances led to the disintegration of the authority of persons previously considered to be authoritative?

It cannot be the purpose of this volume of collected studies to present an exhaustive synthesis of the process of shaping authority in pre-modern times. Yet, the case-studies in this volume offer a representative selection and reflect the dazzling variety of trajectories, concerns, actors and factors that contributed over a long time span of two millennia to the fashioning of the post-mortem and lasting authority of historical persons. Most of the articles deal with Christian material from Late Antiquity or the Middle Ages, but there are also contributions touching upon the Platonic tradition and renaissance paintings. As a whole, this mosaic will highlight some recurring features, some striking parallels, and radical differences on the level of how the processes of shaping authorities were developed and applied over a long time span.

In the first contribution Jan Opsomer and Angela Ulacco closely analyze the widely used but ill-defined concept of authority. Their basic question may be phrased as follows: ‘what is it that gets shaped or manipulated when one speaks of authority?’. Authority is usually restricted to a certain epistemic domain, which must be specified in each case. The role of exegesis is even more crucial in the case of textual traditions when the bearer of authority is not a living person, but is rather perceived and received through a text. The authors propose a descriptive model of different types of epistemic authority as it is at play in textual traditions. The model is aimed at disambiguating the concept and it will enable easy comparison across case studies from various domains. They then apply their theoretical distinctions to examples from the ancient commentary tradition, in particular to the reception and the (re)building of Pythagorean authority in late ancient Platonism.

The contribution of Michiel Meeusen deals with the revival of the genre of *Problemata* in the Early Roman Empire and, more specifically, with its reception by Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. 45–120). Through a detailed analysis of the explicit Aristotelian passages in Plutarch’s *Natural Problems* Meeusen argues that Aristotle’s authority was not only conserved by the Chaeronean but also that the latter felt prompted to add ‘something

of his own' to the discussion. In doing so, Plutarch explicitly or implicitly underlined the innovative character of his own authorial role, demonstrating along the way his own argumentative ingenuity.

Bram Demulder investigates the philosophical and rhetorical shaping of Platonic authority in the case of the exegesis of Plato's statement that the cosmos 'has come to be' (*Timaeus* 28B). By contrasting the diametrically opposed interpretations of the Middle Platonist Plutarch and the Neoplatonist Proclus (c. 412–485) the author is able to establish their approaches towards primary authority (the authority of Plato and the *corpus platonicum*) and secondary authority (the authority of earlier interpreters and interpretations), stressing the importance of the latter in Platonism.

The interplay in Byzantine and modern historical contexts of two authorities from Antiquity is the object of Chiara Meccariello's research. In her contribution she first demonstrates how Homer's authority as a historian was deconstructed in the *Trojan Oration*, a work by the late-first-century Dio Chrysostom, which fiercely criticizes Homer's depiction of the Trojan war and which more broadly reflects on well-established attitudes towards Homer's poems. Secondly, the reception of Dio's speech is examined in the works of the twelfth-century Byzantine author Joannes Tzetzes and of three seventeenth-century German authors (Christophe Adam Rupert, Georg Heinrich Ursin and Christian Kraye). This comparative and diachronic approach enables Meccariello to uncover different arguments used in the process of evaluating authority.

Michael Williams explores how the church father Ambrose's (r. 374–397) exegetical sermons played an important part in the self-conscious construction of the bishop of Milan's own episcopal authority. Intended for a very specific audience, the congregation in the basilica of Milan, the exegetical works are nevertheless revealing about Ambrose's engagement in the complex political and theological debates of his day. It is argued that the oblique style of his homiletic writings is part of a deliberate rhetorical strategy aimed at simultaneously demonstrating his expertise as a biblical exegete while insisting on the complex meanings of scripture. The undetermined nature of his

exegetical pronouncements and his emphasis on many possible interpretations instead of defending a single doctrinal position helped him to stay out of contemporary controversies.

Another *longue durée* perspective is offered by the case study of Christian Müller. The object of Müller's research is Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria (r. 328–373), a primarily eastern bishop whose authority nevertheless enjoyed a long-lasting success in Western Christian culture. Although the historical Athanasius already possessed several merits that recommended him as an authority, a comparative analysis of later sources brings to light sometimes far-reaching transformations of the Greek bishop into his Latin representations. While the 'Latin Athanasius' may be a construct, its literary history still offers precious insights into the diverse reasons for the shaping of authority.

So far, all contributions concerned the authority of persons, of the texts they produced, or the ways their authority was subsequently shaped by others. David Defries focuses on the authority of early medieval miracle stories. In hagiographic texts miracles were understood as events sent by God to offer proof of a saint's holiness. However, sometimes false miracles (illusions) performed by demons were acknowledged in the same texts. This raises the question of who possessed the authority to determine whether *miracula* were false or true. Integrating recent developments in cognitive science Defries argues that claims to authority to judge miracles were left implicit in the texts and that both the monastic authors and the audience looked to hagiography for an experience rather than evidence of sanctity.

Hagiographical sources, together with other historical evidence, form the core of the contribution of Edward Schoolman on the creation and the diffusion of the tenth-century *Life of Barbatianus*, a Syrian holy figure who had lived in fifth-century Ravenna and was presented as the confessor of the Empress Gallia Placidia. On the basis of an examination of the historical circumstances surrounding the redaction of the *vita* and of its distribution in various eleventh- and twelfth-century collections, Schoolman shows how the life of this Syrian man was continuously reshaped to suit the practical needs of the Ravennate bishops and citizens, in particular their aspiration that

Ravenna might regain its Late Roman imperial importance now that the city had become integrated in the Ottonian and German empire.

Jelle Lisson explores the strategies and motivations used to deconstruct authority. Bishop Adalbero of Laon (r. 977–1033) would seem to be an authority for his time: a scion of one of the most powerful aristocratic families, a significant player in political and religious history, and the author of a well-known work broadcasting the theory of the tri-partite medieval society. Despite apparently having every merit to become an authority in his days, nevertheless, every single reference to the man in chronicles posterior to his death paints him in the darkest colours. By analyzing the passages dedicated to Adalbero in five eleventh- and twelfth-century chronicles, Lisson unravels the literary strategies that scapegoat the bishop, demonstrating that each time the personal agendas of the authors lay at the basis of the bishop's depiction.

The contribution of John van Engen looks more closely at two very influential figures of the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux (c. 1090–1153) and Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) and at the ways they claimed a kind of authority for themselves and for their writings. Van Engen focuses in particular on the language they used and on the means they had at their disposal to attain 'authorization'. Through a careful comparison of crucial passages from their impressive literary production he unravels the various elements within their narratives of authorization. In this he discerns a strikingly similar strategy to present themselves as authoritative voices despite their different experiences, positions in life and command of language.

Youri Desplenter and Eva Vandemeulebroucke look at the problem of the promotion of the authority of an author from the perspective of Middle Dutch literature. Jan van Leeuwen (d. 1378), cook of the priory of Groenendaal, is one of four Middle Dutch authors of whom medieval *opera omnia* have been preserved. An analysis of the editorial changes in the textual witnesses of van Leeuwen's mystical treatises ranging from c. 1400 to c. 1550, gives insight into the ways this author was perceived by the Groenendaal monks and into the strategies used to promote the authority of their unschooled lay brother.

Moreover, during the editing and publishing process of his *opera omnia* a clear evolution can be discerned in the process of turning Jan van Leeuwen into a mystical authority, worthy of reading.

How authority was defined during the complex, varied and quickly developing fifteenth century is the central question tackled by Marieke Abram, Anna Dlabáčová and Giacomo Signore. The authors start by making a distinction between normative authority (such as the doctrines of the Church or a canonized author) and physical authority, referring to material transmission within a certain historical context of authority. They then apply these two levels to three different contexts: the arrangement of authoritative texts in a scholastic manuscript, assembled by the Dominican scribe Albertus Löffler (1416–1462), the reshaping of the authority of the Franciscan observant Hendrik Herp (d. 1477) in a manuscript with vernacular spiritual literature used in a Leiden female community, and the creation by the Cartusian Denis of Rijkel (1402–1471) of authority in texts dealing with mystical wisdom. These three case-studies exemplify the constant tension that exists between the normative and physical aspects of authority, and they reflect the broad variety of strategies applied in the process of shaping authority.

The final contribution of this volume focuses on the biography of Filippo Brunelleschi (d. 1446), written more than forty years after the architect's death by Antonio di Tuccio Manetti (1423–1497). Patricia D. Meneses examines Manetti's motivations for his creation of the authoritative image of Brunelleschi to whom alone Manetti ascribed the renovation of architecture in the early fifteenth century, and she seeks to understand why his rehabilitation of the architect did not succeed in the long run. In all probability, the implicit association Manetti emphasized in his biography between Brunelleschi and the commune of Florence was no longer up-to-date in Manetti's own times as there seems to have been a decline of the tradition of communal Florence with the Medici creating a new governing image for themselves.

This collection of essays testifies to the fact that authority in the pre-modern era was a variegated phenomenon indeed. An astonishing array of bearers of authority is presented: from the towering philosophers and writers of Antiquity (Plato, Aristoteles,

Homer), over to Western and Eastern church fathers (Ambrose, Athanasius); encompassing Late Roman and early medieval holy men and bishops (Barbatianus of Ravenna, Adalbero of Laon), prominent and highly influential twelfth-century religious (Bernard of Clairvaux, Hildegard of Bingen), but also a fourteenth-century cook and unschooled lay brother (Jan van Leeuwen) alongside fifteenth-century intellectuals (Albertus Löffler, Hendrik Herp, Denis of Rijkkel) and a Renaissance architect (Filippo Brunelleschi). Moreover, in several cases the historical persons were already considered as authoritative by their contemporaries on the basis of their life style, their achievements and/or their literary production. Others, such as the rather obscure Syrian Saint Barbatianus, gained renown decades or even centuries after they had passed away. In most case-studies the authority of historical persons is to a very large extent solidly embedded in the texts they had produced, but as the contribution of Defries shows authority could also be invested in unidentified texts such as early medieval miracle stories.

As manifold as the persons or things in whom authority was invested are the domains over which authority was attributed, ranging from ancient philosophical and historical knowledge and religious doctrine to more down-to-earth aspects like architecture (Brunelleschi) or good contacts with contemporary political powers (the *Life of Barbatianus*).

Equally diverse are the agents who attributed authority, who recognized that a specific person or text was authority-worthy. In the case-studies we come across ancient philosophers, medieval intellectuals, monks and clerics, scribes and editors of manuscripts. In some instances there are strong indications of the self-conscious construction of someone's own authority, for instance in the case of Ambrose, Bernard of Clairvaux and Hildegard of Bingen, while Plutarch of Chaeronea seemed to have enhanced his own authority by explicitly endorsing the authority of Aristotle.

Authority has an important social dimension in that it arises from the contextualized needs of communication. The efforts of those attributing authority are therefore very often aimed at a larger audience, such as likeminded intellectuals in local or trans-regional milieus, brethren or sisters of their religious

communities or the laity ranging from the leading urban classes to the ordinary faithful, witnessing miraculous events or listening to the sermons of their bishops.

But communication entails in the first place convincing the audience of the rightfulness of someone's authoritative status. Reasons for attributing authority to a person or a text have to be clarified. Just as the identity of the authorities could vary, so do the reasons why authority has been attributed. Most case-studies deal with persons with an essentially intellectual profile, so it should come as no surprise that their knowledge is regarded as the defining element in the process of attributing authority, whether it be in regard to the creation of the world (Plato), important 'historical' facts (Homer), or the deities and God in various religious traditions. Within this utilization of knowledge, we see that extensive learning, exemplary literary skills, mystical experience, didactic or rhetorical qualities or practical accomplishments all form facets of these complicated means that lead to recognition as an authority.

As to why authority is fashioned, the case studies in this volume indicate both explicit and implicit responses. The historical agents in the process depend on precise political, religious or social circumstances and conventions. Authority is never absolute or everlasting. Being an essentially social construct it unescapably is subject to questioning, manipulation, transformation, neglect, destruction, defense, and confirmation. This continuous dynamic is clearly demonstrated in several case-studies which look at authority from the perspective of the *longue durée* (Meccariello, Müller, Schoolman, Lisson). Several cases also deal with deliberate acts of destroying someone's authority. Deconstruction could have a temporary effect, when a successful rehabilitation followed, or the destruction could be permanent (Adalbero of Laon), with the reiteration of someone's negative appreciation through several generations. Very often the same strategies used to shape an authority are later used to break it. There seems to have been an endless variation with regard to the mechanics of shaping and reshaping. However, in many cases, literary strategies such as a purposeful and subtle selection of passages from the authority's life or works are considered as very effective means to transform someone's authority in a specific

direction, serving the goals and the personal agenda of the attributor of authority.

The reasons for success and failure are equally multifarious. Much depended on the acceptance by a third person of the attribution. But also changing historical circumstances, producing a new intellectual climate which questioned long established traditions as well as different social structures and new political or religious constellations, all could have a crucial impact on authoritative persons or texts from the past.

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EPISTEMIC AUTHORITY IN TEXTUAL TRADITIONS: A MODEL AND SOME EXAMPLES FROM ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

1. *Introduction*

The concept of ‘authority’ is omnipresent in the humanities. Across various disciplines, it is used to explain a wide range of related phenomena. Even if we narrow our focus to epistemic authority, though, the variety of phenomena and attitudes denoted by the concept remains astonishing. While non-specialists tend to associate an attitude of blind acceptance with the term ‘authority’, scholars usually approach the term with greater nuance. The examples that we will look at below stem from late-antique commentaries on Plato and Aristotle. If we submit to closer scrutiny the approaches of these commentators towards authorities, it soon becomes clear that the relation of commentators to their authorities is not reducible to blind belief or faith. On the contrary, when confronted with writings of earlier thinkers, ancient commentators engage in refined argumentation and strategic exegesis. Obviously, then, the concept of authority has considerable latitude. In order to understand the unity of the notion and the variety of its manifestations, it is useful to subject the concept and the phenomenon to closer scrutiny. A conceptual analysis will also show that the scholarly concept in fact applies to real phenomena.

Historical scholars are interested in how authority is shaped. They examine ‘mechanisms and strategies by which participants

* We thank Christoph Kelp for stimulating further reflection and Sean Winkler for helping with the English.

in intellectual life at large have shaped the authority of historical persons'.¹ Authority, one's own or that of others, is indeed often shaped, manipulated, constructed, deconstructed or undermined in scholarly discourse. One of the questions that we want to raise is this: what is it that gets shaped or manipulated when we speak of authority?

2. *Semantic issues*

Before we analyse the concept of authority, we will disambiguate the term itself.² The word 'authority' can refer to a certain quality attributed to someone or something (a text, a text corpus, or a textual/oral tradition), or alternatively, to the persons or things that possess this quality, such as when we speak about the authorities to which an author refers. An even more common use in contemporary parlance is the authority or authorities as a person or group that wields power or exercises a right over others (a governmental authority; the persons or bodies that have legislative or executive powers; 'the authorities'), the position that commands such a power or right, or this power or right as it is delegated ('to have the authority to'). Usually, of course, the context suffices to disambiguate the specific use of the term.³ The latter kinds of authority fall under the broader category of executive authority, which can be legal, political and/or moral, and pertain to the power or right to regulate other peoples' behaviour and actions.⁴ The kind of authority that we will focus on is epistemic authority, which is different and logically independent from – though, of course, not unrelated to – executive authority. Semantic issues will not concern us

¹ From the poster of the conference 'Shaping Authority. How did a person become an authority in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance?'

² For a more elaborate account of the semantics of authority, see De George 1985, p. 12–14.

³ Cf. Trinkaus Zagzebski 2012, p. 103.

⁴ For the distinction between these two types of authority, see De George 1985, p. 17–22, and compare Bochenski 1974, p. 70–71. For accounts of executive authority, see, among many others, Adelman 1974; Martin 1976; Flathman 1980; Sennett 1980; Raz 1986; Raz 1990a; Raz 1990b; Hampton & Healey 1998; Raz 2010; Kojève 2014. Furedi 2013, who examines moral and political authority in history, deserves a special mention.

any further here. They are, of course, significant for discussing the use of ‘authority’ and its paronyms in scholarly literature, but for our purposes it is enough to disambiguate the term. We will focus on epistemic authority as the property with which someone or something becomes invested and which is supposed to make that person or thing a source of reliable information (to varying degrees).

3. *Philosophical and historical analyses of epistemic authority*

There is an extensive amount of literature on executive authority in political science, law, social science, anthropology, and more theoretical analysis in political philosophy and ethics. The concept has received relatively little attention, though, until quite recently.⁵ Likewise, although there has been some research into how epistemic authority is conferred upon persons, the research questions in the existing literature are rather different from ours. The interests of epistemologists have mainly been normative: under what conditions is it rational to rely on the epistemic authority of others? Can epistemic authority provide justification? Hence: *should* one attribute authority to others and if so, under what conditions and to what extent? The discussion is often centred on the question of testimony: under what conditions is it advisable to rely on testimony, whether oral or written?⁶ Our interest, though, is a different one. We want to offer a descriptive model of different types of epistemic authority. In other words, we want to examine and offer a model for classifying cases of *de facto* epistemic authority. Thus, we will not examine the issue of legitimacy.

Moreover, we want to focus on an issue that has not yet been studied in the analytical literature: the authority of texts and textual traditions. It is our purpose to offer a descriptive analysis of the phenomenon of epistemic authority as it is

⁵ De George 1970; Bochenski 1974, p. 70–77; De George 1976; De George 1985; Raz 1986; Raz 1990a; Bloor, Barnes & Henry 1996; Goldman 1999; Audi 2001; Koppl 2005; Feldman 2007; Goldberg 2010; Goldman 2010; Raz 2010; Strevens 2010; Trinkaus Zagzebski 2012.

⁶ Cf. Welbourne 1986; Fricker 1987; Coady 1992; Audi 1997; Goldman 2001; Audi 2005; Fricker 2006; Lackey & Sosa 2006; Keren 2007.

at play in textual traditions. We present a grid that can be used to get a clearer focus on historical case studies and, more importantly, to facilitate the comparison of the results of such case studies. This is where we think the most important benefit of our model lies; not so much in improving the analysis of individual cases – although the model can be of some use there as well – but rather for comparative aims. In the present situation, the term ‘authority’ is applied to cases that are so different that comparisons become very difficult. For each individual case study, one has to examine what exactly the author means by the term. That is, of course, only in the best case, in which the author is explicit about the use of the concept.

Our insistence on the descriptive nature of our approach does not mean that we ignore the inherently normative nature of the phenomenon that we are studying. *Every* ascription of epistemic authority⁷ is normative in some way. It involves assenting to the authority of a person or thing by assuming that there are good reasons for doing so and that if there are good reasons, one ought to treat them as trustworthy. That is also why the communication of one’s authority-related choices to others implies a normative claim as to whom or what may be acceptable as authorities. Attributing authority amounts to claiming that the authority is legitimate.⁸ As soon as attributions of authority are communicated, the phenomenon acquires a social dimension (in reality, it is almost always social, but we distinguish the two moments for analytic purposes); that is, it becomes a fundamentally normative social fact. Nevertheless, our model is descriptive insofar that it does not involve any judgment on the part of the researcher regarding the value of the reasons for holding something or someone to be authoritative. In other words, we do not examine whether the reasons for attributing

⁷ The same is, of course, true for executive authority. See below.

⁸ A special problem is posed by dishonest communications of authority attributions. This is the case of someone merely pretending to treat someone or something as an authority. In that case, there is a difference between one’s own attributions of authority and that which gets communicated. An even more thorny issue is that of a person not admitting to herself that the person or thing she treats as an authority is in fact not a legitimate authority to her. In such cases of deception or self-deception, however, we assume that the authority is *de facto* attributed and/or *de facto* communicated.

authority are *actually* good reasons. A historical scholar would not get very far if she were to come to the conclusion that one should not consider Aristotle an authority on the four elements since these elements do not actually exist (as we know nowadays, they are not the building blocks of material reality, and fire is not even considered a material substance), or that Plato should not be considered an authority on the issue of whether there are gods and what they are (nowadays, one is not likely to find many people who believe that these gods exist). Rather, it is important for the scholar to discern what the historical agents could consider to be good reasons for attributing authority. In order to study this, it is important to look at two different things: 1) reasons expressly stated by the historical agents, even if not explicitly *as* reasons for attributing authority and 2) implicit background beliefs.

We shall now first present a brief analysis of the concept and then offer some illustrations from ancient philosophy, more particularly from the Neoplatonic reception of the Pythagorean tradition.

4. *The ontology of epistemic authority*

Authority is a three-place relation. Moreover, the phenomenon is complex and involves various parameters.⁹ The basic form of the relation consists in the fact that someone ascribes a certain quality to someone or something with respect to a certain epistemic domain. The three relata are as follows:

1. The one who atributes authority (*A*)
2. The person or the thing in whom authority is invested, the bearer of authority, sometimes called ‘the authority’ (*B*)
3. The domain over which authority is attributed (*D*).

The relation of authority, then, is $R(A, B, D)$, with ‘authority’ amounting to some kind of epistemic reliability. It is possible to distinguish between different types, which could then be called R, S, T – types of an encompassing authority class or family. However, these types pertain to the epistemological

⁹ Cf. Bochenski 1974, p. 57; De George 1985, p. 27–34.

side, broadly speaking, of authority and make no difference for its ontology. The ontology of authority is completely expressed by $R(A, B, D)$. If B is an authority for A with respect to some area D , A is prepared to believe B 's claims regarding D , at least under certain conditions and to some extent.¹⁰ The status of authority thus involves the recognition of the (alleged) fact that someone is epistemically reliable and credible; a reliable witness, a source of reliable testimony, even a source of truth.

If A and B are persons, B is an authority for A if and only if A is prepared to accept certain assertions made by B as true or reliable or trustworthy, merely by virtue of the fact that it is B who makes these assertions. More needs to be said, though. Authority is usually restricted to a certain epistemic domain that needs to be specified in each case. It is not entirely necessary, though, that A regards B 's assertions as being undoubtedly true. She may also regard those assertions as being merely probable or persuasive, but credible enough for A to think *prima facie* that she ought to accept them. In order for us to have a case of authority, it is sufficient and necessary that B is an epistemically reliable source of information for A in the sense just explained. In that case, B is *de facto* authoritative for A , even if A does not have genuinely good grounds for treating B as such or even ought not do so (in which case the authority is not epistemologically legitimate). The various forms that this reliability takes – from *prima facie* trustworthiness to absolute reliability, where the source is considered to be infallible – fall under the epistemology of authority.

While the attributor of authority (A) needs to be a person or a group of persons, the bearer of authority (B) could be an inanimate object,¹¹ such as a written document, a narrative or theoretical text, a sign, a map, a thermometer, a book (in some religions even the material bearer of the text), an oral or written tradition. One could think that nonpersons only possess authority because of the persons that are their authors, but that is not necessarily so. It is certainly true that we frequently

¹⁰ Cf. De George 1985, p. 27.

¹¹ De George 1985, p. 16; *pace* Bochenski 1974, p. 57.

attribute an authoritative status to a text by virtue of the fact that we, say, consider the author as someone deserving of trust and epistemic reliability. In that case, the authority of the text is derivative. Alternatively, however, someone may attribute authority to the text(s) directly, without even thinking of the authors. Written laws may be a case in point, although that is debatable; anonymous texts may be another. One could argue, however, that in most cases, the author, not necessarily identical with the producer of the text, lingers in the background. In the case of laws (which is, of course, more a case of executive rather than pure epistemic authority) that could be political bodies (lawgiving persons, parliaments, or others),¹² while in the case of religious texts, it could be divine entities held to be the source of inspiration; in that case they would be considered as sources of knowledge or truth who use human scribes as mere conduits.

The authority relation ontologically depends on an act of attribution by which *B* is related to *A* as having epistemic authority in domain *D*. This act of attribution need neither be explicit nor fully conscious in the sense that *A* entertains second-order beliefs about *B*'s authoritative status. It is sufficient that *A* epistemically behaves in such a way that one can infer that *A* regards *B* as an authority. For instance, if *A* forms beliefs that are solely or mainly based on the testimony of *B*, in the eyes of *A*, *B* is *de facto* invested with authority.

5. *Epistemological issues*

'Authority' should probably not be regarded as a single type of triadic relation, but rather as a class containing different types of authority relations. Ontologically, these are all authority relations in the same sense, but they can be differentiated with respect to the various epistemic qualities that get attributed – all falling under epistemic reliability – and the reasons that support these attributions. *A* may take the views of *B* to be true,

¹² In modern democracies, laws are authoritative because they are regarded as being issued by authoritative legislative bodies. Yet that may not be universally the case for all societies past and present.

infallibly true, probable, plausible, as providing justification (whether considered as externalistic or internalistic), etc. She may use information from *B* simply as material for deliberative purposes, on equal footing with beliefs held by herself, while in other cases, she may see truth claims enunciated by *B* as undermining her own previously held beliefs, however firmly she held them previously. At the very least, to consider *B* as an authority implies that one is inclined to believe or accept propositions thought to stem from *B*. Epistemologists who have analysed the concept of authority usually restrict the concept to one of these types. For instance, they postulate that for someone or something to have authority the information provided must amount to a defeating reason for holding a certain belief.¹³ Since our purpose is primarily descriptive, though, we want to account for all different types of cases to which scholars apply the term ‘authority’ with some justification. Therefore, we leave these different possibilities open and admit that different types can be included in the authority family. Further research is necessary in order to map these epistemologically different types and potentially provide a taxonomy of them. As we explained earlier, we are not engaging in epistemology here. That is, we are not evaluating the legitimacy of the attributions and the soundness of the reasons that authors give for assenting to an authority. However, we do have to make epistemological distinctions in order to determine the type of reliability or trustworthiness that historical agents attribute. When we examine the historical reasons involved in past attributions of authority, whether implicit or explicit, we inevitably touch upon the epistemological issue of justification. Here again we look at *de facto* reasons. These were of course normative, but not necessarily normative for us. This does not mean that the scholar has to refrain from evaluating these reasons at all. While for a purely historical inquiry this may not be necessary, for rational reconstructions and the so-called philosophical historiography of philosophy, it will be mandatory to look at whether certain reasons could be considered *good*

¹³ Cf. Trinkaus Zagzebski 2012, p. 45–51. See also Hampton & Healey 1998, p. 88, 116–117 for an analogous view on moral authority.

reasons by historical agents given certain background assumptions to which they were committed, and even whether they are good reasons at all.¹⁴

The attribution of authority indeed invariably happens for specific reasons.¹⁵ Even if these are not explicit, it will be heuristically useful to assume that they exist. *That* they exist can be stipulated, since it follows from what we consider to count as attributions of authority and as reasons for such attributions. Authority entails that one holds certain assertions to be important and meaningful. *A* will have grounds for taking the views of *B* to be true, probable, etc. These grounds may be rational, non-rational, or even irrational,¹⁶ yet they should at least be cognitively accessible to *A*.¹⁷ Therefore, we should specify the reasons that *A* has for accepting *B* as an authority and whether this involves *A* looking for further corroborating evidence for each case in which we apply the concept. The grounds, i.e. the reasons that person *A* has, are not themselves part of the relation that is authority. Rather, they are attached to one of the relata, *A*. They consist in a quality or a number of qualities which *A* perceives in *B*. In other words, it is *A* who attaches these qualities to *B*. Secondly, this quality can be considered to be possessed by *B*, namely by everyone who accepts *A*'s attribution of authority (and who in turn may become herself an *A* by assuming and thus reiterating the attribution).

A further research question would include an evaluation of these grounds. One could ask oneself whether the grounds held by *A* could be considered *good* grounds by others who share

¹⁴ This would still not amount to what an epistemologist would call 'good reasons', since the concept of genuinely good reasons is incompatible with relativising good reasons with respect to different agents. With this caveat in mind, we can refer to Frede 1987 (reprint: Frede 2006) for different approaches to the history of philosophy and the corresponding assessment of reasons for holding philosophical beliefs.

¹⁵ Wild 1974, p. 16–17 makes an analogous case for executive authority.

¹⁶ The attribution of authority presupposes an implicit and spontaneous form of self-reliance. Cf. Trinkaus Zagzebski 2012, p. 29–51.

¹⁷ If we were to examine the legitimacy of epistemic authority, we would have to drop the requirement of cognitive accessibility and would include among the reasons not only cognitive states or psychological facts about *A*, but also objective states of affairs (mainly, but not exclusively facts about *B*), as these are more adequate than beliefs to justify attributions of authority.

some of the same basic beliefs as *A* (i.e. contemporaries who were raised with a similar set of beliefs regarding the natural world, morality, the existence or non-existence of God or other divine beings, etc.). One could also ask the question as to whether the grounds held by *A* are *genuinely* good grounds. Whether one can be justified to attribute authority, or whether it is rational to do so, will depend, among other things, on both epistemic and communicative virtues of the authoritative persons or nonpersons. As long as we are merely interested in the description of historical phenomena, the latter question can be bracketed. A *philosophical* history of philosophy – which we consider to be only one among many legitimate approaches to the history of thought – will include the question of whether an attribution is rational and legitimate. In any case, epistemic as well as communicative virtues will often play a role in the factual ascription of authority as well. One attributes authority to a person because that person is held to possess knowledge, wisdom, learning, experience, hermeneutic competence, discernment, honesty, truthfulness, objectivity, prudence or some other epistemic virtue. Communicative virtues, such as clarity, concision, accuracy, literary skills, argumentative competence, didactic qualities, and others, are also important. The epistemic and communicative virtues of texts are analogous to those of persons; one may think of univocity, accuracy, clarity, completeness. As we will see, however, sometimes equivocity and lack of clarity may be factually conducive to shaping authority. Obscurity has indeed the paradoxical capacity of soliciting trust, as humans apparently like to believe what they do not understand. An utterance that is ambivalent or otherwise unclear offers leeway for interpretations that eventually fit what one chooses to believe. Many texts that are obscure or that are objectively considered nonsensical and defy literal interpretations (the Corpus Hermeticum, the Chaldean Oracles, Gnostic and other gospels) have accordingly often become invested with high authority.

Just as with trust – a relation akin to authority and that often accompanies it – epistemic components may be mixed with affective and behavioural ones.¹⁸ If we use someone as an

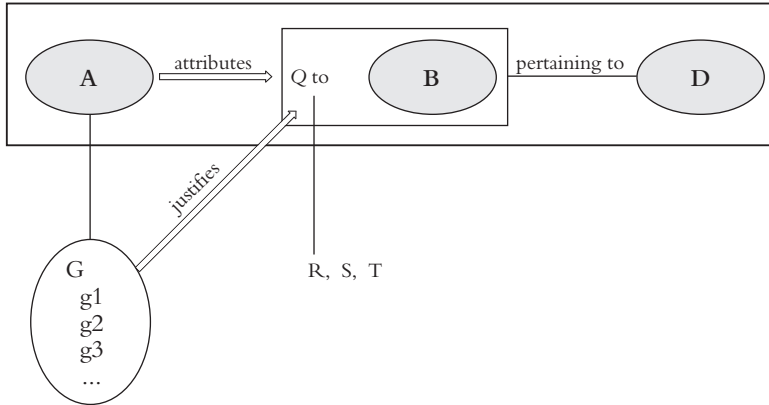
¹⁸ Trinkaus Zagzebski 2012, p. 37.

authority, we are likely to feel trusting toward that person and behave in a way that shows that we consider them to be authoritative.

6. *The grid*

Authority is a complex relation that involves several variables. In principle, it is possible to specify the following in each case:

1. who attributes authority [A];
2. who or what is the bearer of authority [B];
3. for which epistemic domain authority is attributed [D];
4. what type of authority is attributed, i.e. the epistemological quality [Q] of the authority relation R, S, T ;
5. what the grounds (reasons) [G] are for the attribution.



To the extent that one does not distinguish these aspects, the concept used in scholarship retains a degree of opacity. Therefore, it is important to keep these different factors apart, as a simple example will show.

Now and then, we encounter the term ‘absolute authority’ in scholarship, but we can already show quite easily that this could mean very different things. The predicate ‘absolute’ could refer to one of the relata or to the quality or type of relation itself. It could also mean that a claim of authority extends to all domains of knowledge (D), or that all members of a group (A) accept some B as an authority, or it can refer to the epistemic status of that which is attributed (i.e. what we can call the

epistemic quality of R), namely, infallible knowledge. Thus, the limit case of ‘absolute authority’ would be the universal acceptance (all A) of the unconditional authority of some B over all epistemic domains, with B providing infallible knowledge such that it defeats all of the beliefs A might have held independently of B . Of course, it is unlikely that such an authority was ever attributed to any human B . No doubt, it has been attributed to gods. These, however, have the disadvantage of not being easily accessible sources of information. Even those traditions that claim to possess texts produced by a god have to admit that such texts do not provide answers to all epistemic questions.

7. *A competence for authority relations*

Human rational agents have a competence – or a class of competences – for authority, analogous to their linguistic competence. They attribute authority, trustworthiness, credibility and reliability to others. They are also aware of the fact that other people do the same thing and thus that some of us are capable of influencing the processes by which authority is attributed. Likewise, they engage in manipulation of states of authority and the formation of relations of authority. This can be done without having a clearly defined concept of authority or in some cases without being aware of having such a concept.¹⁹ Analogously, people can be ironic and can recognise irony without having studied pragmatics or even having a corresponding reflective concept. This ability to handle epistemic authority unreflectively may be the most common case. In other cases, people have a conscious, even if vague, grasp of the concept of authority and the conditions under which authority is attributed. This is what we expect to find in the case of textual traditions.

These assumptions are often silently taken for granted in research into case studies when the research hypothesis is that authority is construed, manipulated or that people depend upon authority. The presumption of a competence of authority is absolutely necessary for this type of research. Otherwise, for those who deal with authority, it would be impossible to explain

¹⁹ See also Baltussen 2009, p. 122.

the reality of the phenomenon in the absence of a fully-fledged theory. Competence for attributing authority is presumably a necessary condition for understanding (communications of) attributions of authority made by others. This 'recognitional competence' presupposes the reality of the phenomenon and indeed, we are convinced that the attribution of authority is a sufficient condition for the reality of the authority relation. In other words, the attribution founds the relation. Both the attributional and the recognitional competence form the basis for the more complex social phenomenon of authority, its construal, its undermining and its manipulation.

However, scholars rarely spell out what kind of conscious awareness the different parties are supposed to have of the authority in question, what it is to have such a concept or competence, or whether authority is merely an instrumentalist scholarly concept that allows us to explain certain historical correlations, but does not imply any strong existential claims, in other words, that the historical agents have no awareness at all of any attributions of authority. However, this may merely be a theoretical possibility and not a position actually held by scholars. Nevertheless, it is rather difficult to tell given the lack of theoretical accounts. The account of authority that *we* offer here is not an instrumentalist one. Since we believe that authority relations are objective social facts, we are committed to a realist position.

The question 'How did a person become an authority in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance?' can now be given a principled answer: because some agent(s) *attributed* and continue(s) to attribute authority to that person. This means that the attributor's perspective is logically prior to any questions related to the shaping and construal of authority. The person who wants to become an authority or who wants another person or nonperson to become authoritative can try to influence others to attribute authority, but the authority relation depends upon its bestowal. Once authority has been attributed and widely shared, it becomes a social fact. Someone or something then becomes a recognised authority in a certain domain for a group of people. Our competence for authority enables us to anticipate this complex process and to attempt to influence it.

As soon as one examines the historical reality of authority relations, though, the issue becomes a great deal murkier. People may attribute authority on the mere basis of previous attributions, which have then become grounds for the new attributions. The attributions can be seen as atomic events, which together constitute a very complex and vague phenomenon, then studied by scholars. The domain of authority is often unclear and its borders are vague. The attributors may be a large group, the structure of which is complex and dynamic, while the bearers of authority may not be well-defined (figures, texts, figures in texts). Indeed, conflicts between authorities are the rule rather than the exception. The quality of the authority relation may remain to some extent undetermined or unclear, and typically varies, both synchronically and diachronically. There may be a difference between the officially professed type within an institution, say defeating authority of a dogma within a religious community, and the actual use that is made of that authority (here the term ‘subversion’ often arises in scholarship). The grounds of the attribution may be unclear (sometimes intentionally so), they may shift. They can also comprise emotional (awe, fondness of a tradition) as well as rational elements. The failure to account for the grounds could be due to intellectual laziness, a lack of critical awareness, or even a general lack of education. In the opposite case, people consciously construe a whole theory that justifies the attribution of authority to persons or nonpersons. The epistemic authority vested in persons or things may provide grounds for forming beliefs that are of various strengths. These grounds may be weak or strong, inconclusive or conclusive (i.e. decisive), weak, strong-but-defeatable, undefeatable, and (of lesser interest for our purposes, but still crucial for the epistemologist) adequate or inadequate, apparently good (in the sense that it is not yet settled) or genuinely good. Of course, the differences in strength will be crucial for determining or evaluating what happens in the case of conflicting authorities. However foggy the reality may be, and despite the impossibility in certain cases to determine these different factors with any degree of certainty, it remains useful to keep them apart and try to disentangle them to whatever extent possible.

As a social phenomenon, it is essential for authority that its attribution be communicated in one way or another. Even so, it remains to be seen whether the authority will be accepted by a third person. A comprehensive study of authority will also take into account the reasons for success and failure. To a large extent, these will depend upon the status of the person or the text that communicates that he, she or it [C] bestows epistemic authority upon some bearer. Since the person that conveys the idea that some *B* ought to be recognised as authoritative typically does so by indicating that she herself takes *B* to be such (this is not so when *C* is a mere intermediary, primarily when *C* is a text), in most cases, *C* coincides with *A*. If *C* herself has an authoritative status for the person who receives the message, the latter is more likely to accept *B* as authoritative. At the same time, one can enhance one's own authority by explicitly attributing authority to others. This is insofar that the capacity to successfully attribute authority can only belong to those who are in a position to do so. Thus, *A* is often deemed to possess the epistemic virtues, relative to *D*, that qualify her to assign authority to *B* in *D*. Hence, when she communicates that she regards *B* as authoritative, she enhances or confirms her own authority in the eyes of those who get the message. The role of institutions should also be mentioned here. Belonging to an institution ordinarily constitutes a strong reason for being perceived as authoritative. A positive institutional status enhances the authority of *C*, and the perceived institutional status of *B* can also be part of the reasons for *A* to confer authority upon *B*.

8. *Authority and textual traditions*

Authority is a key concept in textual traditions and in scholarship on textual traditions. In cases where the bearer of authority is not a living person, but a text (usually, but not necessarily, *because* the text is taken to present the views of a specific person), the role of exegesis will often be crucial. By dispelling ambiguities or insisting on certain interpretations, the source's authority will be secured and developed in a certain direction. Somewhat in the spirit of Plato's *Phaedrus*, we could say that texts themselves are dead objects, but that they come alive

because of their readers. In themselves, they can only repeat the same things again and again, but readers can make them say different things.²⁰ Texts are usually more in need of support when they originated in a distant past. Given the opacity and ambiguity of texts and the apparent or real inconsistencies that they often contain, the need for interpretation, paraphrase, exegesis, and commentaries becomes understandable. This extends to new texts developing certain ideas contained in earlier texts or texts that are composed in the same vein and style. In this way, textual traditions develop. More and more texts come to be included in the tradition and the result is that the original texts gain a considerable authority. Also, texts from later stages of the tradition, whether perceived to be later or not, often acquire an authoritative status. A text will only give birth to a large offspring of new texts if it is held to be of some importance. This, of course, often means that the text already has a certain amount of epistemic authority. Yet the very existence of these other texts by itself enhances the status of the tradition as a whole and especially of its central texts. One might think that texts are only authoritative because of the authority of their (alleged) authors. The texts of the tradition, though, sometimes acquire a relative independence from their authors, so that the text or texts are the immediate recipients of the authority attributed.²¹ Since we have a competence for authority (as we have seen, this competence is twofold: attributional and recognitional), authors of texts may intentionally aim at enhancing authority through the production of supplementary texts. We have mentioned inconsistencies in the texts at the origin of a tradition. Contradictions obviously pose a threat to the authority of the text, as it is not rational to accept inconsistent statements. One way to deal with this situation is to produce an explanation that resolves the inconsistency by showing that it is merely apparent. Another option would be to reject the authority of the text. Yet the higher the authority this text already enjoys and the more ingrained it is in the tradition to which one is intellectually and possibly emotionally commit-

²⁰ Plato, *Phdr.* 275d4–e5.

²¹ De George 1985, p. 28.

ted, the higher the price of rejecting it. This explains the great efforts to which commentators are willing to go to preserve the authority that texts have for them. The growth of a tradition inevitably increases the potential for conflicts and inconsistencies; take, for instance, those conflicts between authorities that have become part of the same tradition (e.g. Plato and Aristotle in late Antiquity). These pose a threat to authority and thus need to be resolved in *additional* commentaries and exegesis. In many cases, the assumption of a deeper harmony beyond the inconsistencies takes the form of a normative principle of interpretation.

What constitutes a tradition, though, may mean different things, especially when the traditions are religious or involve a religious component (e.g. ancient Pythagoreanism and Platonism). The simplest form is the case of an original text with a high epistemic authority because of its contents. In that case, the tradition aims at preserving and elucidating the original meaning, which is sometimes held to have been the object of an original revelation. A second type is that of a tradition in which that which is transmitted is not so much content, but an original experience, to be renewed and reinterpreted in every generation. Yet another leading idea behind a tradition may be that the original revelation is enriched and deepened through the tradition.²² Traditions often reflect upon their own status and may over time, in a protean fashion, change their form as a result of this reflection.

9. *Some illustrations from recent scholarship*

We will now take a look at a few cases from existing literature on ancient philosophy. In ‘Plato’s *autoritas* and the rebirth of the commentary tradition’ David Sedley examines the concept of authority in its relation to commentaries on Plato. Since Plato is above criticism, ‘you must seek a compromise between adjusting your views to fit what he says (the fundamentalist approach), and adjusting, that is reinterpreting, what he says

²² Cf. Trinkaus Zagzebski 2012, p. 191–199.

to fit your views'.²³ The anonymous commentator on the *Theaetetus* is the first, Sedley claims, to try to *rebuild* Plato's authority, after its virtual disappearance at the end of the Hellenistic time. According to Sedley, the model for this building of authority is found in the rival schools, where the authority of the founders went unquestioned. In order to rebuild Plato's authority, the commentator systematically attacks a sceptical reading of Plato, and subjects the dialogues to a careful exegesis, reinterpreted 'as directly representing Plato's own doctrines', and using sophisticated exegetical tools to get rid of seeming contradictions.²⁴ George Boys-Stones has criticised Sedley's account by pointing out the difference between the Stoic and Epicurean concepts of authority and those at play in the emerging Platonic tradition. The founders of the Stoic school were never understood to be unequivocal sources that provided direct access to the truth. A reference to Zeno is often just meant to show that a certain view has a genuine pedigree. Platonists, on the contrary, quote Plato in order to defeat interpretations that are inconsistent with the quotation and commit themselves 'to the truth of a proposition *on the grounds* that Plato had said it', even in cases where they fail to see why it might be true (p. 103). *This is therefore a different variety of the authority relation.* Not even in the Epicurean school does one find anything like the Platonic appeal to authority, even though they come much closer to the Platonist practice.²⁵

'Authority' can mean many different things [...]: it can, for example, mean the right to be taken seriously (and by extension the right of the person following the authority to be taken seriously himself); but it can also mean something stronger: the unquestioned possession of the truth. On the face of it, one of the things that seems to distinguish Platonist from Hellenistic philosophy is precisely the Platonists' attribution of the latter kind of authority to Plato. (Boys-Stones 2001, p. 104)

²³ Sedley 1997, p. 110.

²⁴ Sedley 1997, p. 122–123.

²⁵ Boys-Stones 2001, p. 102–104. The Epicurean tradition indeed is an interesting case of strong authority. Yet, as Erler 2011 has shown, even there, the towering presence of the master did not prevent innovations in the tradition. For teaching authority in Stoicism, cf. Reydam-Schils 2011.

Platonists argued, according to Boys-Stones, that Plato was himself the heir of an ancient wisdom tradition, which he cast in more philosophical and systematic language. Thus, they offered an *explanation* of Plato's authority; they explicate the grounds for the attribution of epistemic authority. Boys-Stones' account is taken over by Peter Van Nuffelen in his monograph entitled *Rethinking the Gods* and is supplemented by a survey of the religious traditions in which these processes were imbedded.²⁶

The model that we have presented above would probably have facilitated this scholarly debate as it would have encouraged a more precise account of the authority relation, its epistemological quality and the grounds adduced for its justification from the outset. Yet even without our model, the scholars mentioned just now have presented sophisticated analyses of the phenomenon. This confirms our earlier claim about the merit of our model: the main advantage of our model would consist in the univocal specification of varieties of the authority relation across different case studies.

Where the aforementioned studies focus on the beginnings of the Platonic tradition in the post-Hellenistic period, Han Baltussen studies the late Neoplatonist Simplicius. His definition of authority is an interesting one:

I understand authority to refer to the assumed importance of philosophical views (and by proxy, the holders of these views or the books in which these are laid down) as sources of a truth to be accepted without testing or disputing these. (Baltussen 2009, p. 121)

Let us first point out that while this definition may be suitable for the limited purposes of this particular case study, it will not do as a general definition, for reasons that should be clear by now. Baltussen goes on to argue that the very idea of the authority of a canon 'is at odds with the idea of development' (p. 122). Baltussen qualifies Simplicius' practice as the *subversion* of authority on the grounds that Simplicius deviates from his authorities in order to develop positions of his own, even though

²⁶ See esp. Van Nuffelen 2011, p. 2–4.

he insists that what he is doing sticks to the tradition and is not original. Obviously, Baltussen can only claim this practice to be a subversion of authority *because of* his rather restricted definition of authority. If authority is not taken to give unqualified, direct and perspicuous access to an unquestionable truth, but rather as providing plausible, but defeasible premises to be included in further deliberation, there is no reason to speak of the subversion of authority in this case. One may call this a weaker notion of authority, but it firmly belongs to the authority family, as can easily be seen by the types discussed in the literature on epistemic authority.

An example of this, as it were, ‘weaker’ use of authority can be observed in Aristotle’s use of the endoxastic method. At the beginning of an investigation, Aristotle often gives a survey of existing opinions on the subject, in particular an opinion of ‘the wise’, which are typically his philosophical predecessors. Even if Aristotle does not end up agreeing with them, their views are taken into serious consideration and are clearly regarded as epistemically valuable. Similar uses of authorities can be found in the *Problemata* tradition. From there, it spread to the typical treatment of ‘natural questions’ in general, beyond the Peripatetic tradition strictly speaking. Plutarch’s *Natural Questions* and *Table Talks*, Seneca’s *Natural Questions* and Pliny’s *Natural History* are cases in point.

We conclude with some brief illustrations from our own research. The late ancient commentator on Aristotle, Simplicius (6th century), recognises several figures of authority. No doubt, Plato’s authority is the greatest; not only is the epistemic value attributed to his views *de facto* greater than that of all others, his authority also ranges over a larger area than that of any other philosopher. Comparatively, Aristotle’s authority is slightly less. Simplicius, though, is a famous harmonizer. He defends the view that Plato and Aristotle are *almost* invariably in agreement, despite appearances, even in cases where Aristotle seems to criticise his teacher. In such instances, Simplicius argues that both thinkers are still in agreement even though he lets Plato’s views prevail. This means: Plato’s views as Simplicius understands them, which could be through an Aristotelian lens, even if he is not aware of that. In his attempts to harmonise them, he may

have adapted Plato's views, bringing them closer to Aristotle's and of course also his own, as Baltussen shows. To what extent Simplicius was aware of this is perhaps impossible to answer. Obviously, though, he was convinced that he reconstructed the genuine views of Plato, rather than some 'aristotelianised' version of Plato. If the latter was the case, it would no longer be true to say that *Plato* was an authority for Simplicius.

The Pythagorean tradition poses particularly special problems. Simplicius takes over the idea from Iamblichus, a predecessor who is another authoritative figure for him, that Plato inherits his wisdom from an ancient tradition and that this tradition culminated in the thought of Pythagoras. Iamblichus underpins this claim in his biography of Pythagoras, in which he emphasises the unsurpassed intellectual and didactic virtues of his subject as well as his access to ancient sources of wisdom through his travels (e.g. to Egypt and Chaldea). *De iure*, Pythagoras would therefore be the overruling authority, but as a matter of fact, this position is occupied by Plato. Iamblichus does interpret Pythagoras as a proto-Platonist, as conforming to ideas reconstructed from Plato's dialogues and other testimonies on Plato's philosophy. Both Plato and Pythagoras are figures of *de facto* authority for Iamblichus, but Plato appears to be the higher authority. Iamblichus' problem is how to get access to the thought of Pythagoras, given the absence of direct written testimony. In order to overcome this problem, Iamblichus has created a canon of Pythagorean texts; that is, texts allegedly written by Pythagoras and his immediate disciples. Iamblichus gathered dispersed texts into a single corpus, either without being aware of their pseudepigraphic character or at least taking these texts all to be genuine.²⁷ Even so, though, the Pythagorean corpus poses serious problems for the interpretation because of their obscurity. Iamblichus and Simplicius take these texts to be cryptic in the literal sense of the word. They argue that the Pythagoreans intentionally encrypted deep truths into their texts, in such a way that they can be decrypted by people with the required background, the right tools, philosophical assumptions and mind-set, but remain opaque to the uninitiated.

²⁷ Cf. Macris 2002, 2009.

According to Iamblichus, this was allegedly done in order to protect the divinely inspired truths from ridicule of those who are unable to understand. Iamblichus, and by extension Simplicius, thus offers a *theory* that supports the attribution of authority to their Pythagorean sources. This includes claims about their intellectual and communicative virtues, about the mechanisms of the transmission of these texts and about their philosophical content.²⁸ Simplicius, for instance, believes and argues that a text attributed to Archytas (falsely, as we know) and dealing with categories, was the source of Aristotle's work entitled *Categories* and the theory contained in it. Simplicius explains the differences between the two works through the idea that Archytas did not have the sensible, but the intelligible world in view. Thus, he counters a possible objection to the status of the text and anchors it more firmly in the tradition in which Iamblichus had placed it. Since the text of Archytas is thus thought to address the higher realms of reality, it can be used to explain issues in Aristotle's text.²⁹ This also confirms Simplicius' idea of a harmony between Plato and Aristotle, because the work on the *Categories* that is supposed to be Archytas' is, in fact, imbued with Platonic ideas. Simplicius thus construes a tradition in which he inscribes himself in a rather explicit way in the prologue to his own commentary on the *Categories*.³⁰ This is conducive to enhancing his own authority with his future readers. In a sense, he shapes his own authority, but in fact, he is dependent on the possibility that others are willing to attribute epistemic authority to him. Thus all exegetes, including Simplicius himself, become part of one great authoritative tradition.³¹

10. Conclusion

These few examples confirm that authority is a variegated phenomenon. It is a family of complex relations with many

²⁸ Opsomer (forthcoming) analyses Iamblichus' dealing with the authority of religious myths by specifying the different parameters of our model.

²⁹ Cf. Gavray 2011.

³⁰ Simpl., in *Cat.* 1.3–3.17.

³¹ The same idea is expressed in Proclus, *Plat. Theol.* I.1.

variables. In the context of a detailed case study, it is not feasible to offer a univocal definition that is not only universally applicable to all types of authority, but also specifies the contents of the specific authority relation relevant for the case studied. It was our aim to show, however, that a broader study of the concept of epistemic authority as such, as applicable to the case of textual traditions, may be a useful undertaking, if only to provide a common framework with which different case studies can be located and their comparison facilitated.

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Abstract

‘Authority’ is a widely used, but not very well-defined concept in scholarly discourse. Epistemologists have become increasingly interested in the concept of epistemic authority specifically. So far, however, their discussions have not been brought to bear upon historical scholarship. We propose a model, then, for examining epistemic authority in texts and textual traditions. In order to do so, we examine the ontology and epistemology of epistemic authority. We argue that epistemic authority is not just a scholarly tool, but a phenomenon belonging to social reality. Ultimately, it is constituted by single acts of attribution, which are then, in one way or another, communicated and disseminated. We also specify the different elements that make up the structure of the authority relation and specify its varieties due to the epistemological quality of the attributed property as well as the grounds for its attribution. This results in a grid of parameters that helps to disambiguate the term ‘authority’, facilitating a comparison across case studies from various domains. The model is descriptive and offers a means by which to classify *de facto* attributions of authority, whether these attributions are legitimate or not. A few examples from scholarship on ancient Platonism illustrate the complexity of the issue and the benefits of our model.

ARISTOTLE'S AUTHORITY
IN THE TRADITION
OF NATURAL PROBLEMS.
THE CASE OF PLUTARCH
OF CHAERONEA

1. *Introduction: the Aristotelian tradition of natural problems*

The ancient Greek tradition of natural problems deals with particular difficulties in the broad field of ancient Greek 'physics', thus involving questions of medicine, biology, meteorology, etc. Aristotle's authority is specifically linked to this type of erotapocritical research.¹ The Stagirite refers to his natural problems throughout his entire oeuvre, but unfortunately the original Aristotelian collection of natural problems did not survive.² Scholars have argued that it certainly had a major influence on the tradition that originated from it, but it remains unclear how much material in the Ps.-Aristotelian *Natural problems* (as the collection stands today in 38 books) is original and what was added by later Peripatetics. It is generally accepted that Aristotle's initial project was further elaborated by his students and later acolytes, who added new problems and revised older ones.³ The uncer-

¹ It should be noted, though, that Democritus was the first to compose an actual collection of problems, viz. the *Χερνικά* (or *Χειρόκμητα*?) προβλήματα (D.L. 9, 49 = DK68A33 and DK68B299h), which is no longer extant. For further discussion of this title (*Χερνικά* is a hapax and *Χειρόκμητα* uncertain; cf. DK68B300), see Flashar 1962, p. 302–303 and Krafft 1969. On Democritus' aetiological activities and procedures more generally, see Meeusen 2014.

² See Arist., *Mete.* 2, 6, 363a24 (cf. also 4, 3, 381b13), *Somm. vig.* 2, 456a29, *Iuv.* 5, 470a18, *PA* 3, 15, 676a18, *GA* 2, 8, 747b5, 4, 4, 772b11, 4, 7, 775b37 (see Louis 1991–1994, I, p. xxv–xxvii).

³ See Louis 1991–1994, I, p. xxxv: 'Les problèmes qu'elle [sc. Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems*] renferme n'ont donc pas tous la même origine. Les uns ont été rédigés par Aristote lui-même. D'autres sont postérieurs au Stagirite d'environ un siècle. D'autres enfin ne datent probablement que du second siècle de notre

tainty about the historical authorship is not irrelevant, therefore, because it can hint at the popularity of the genre of natural problems in a large, and largely anonymous, scientific community, to be situated primarily in the pedagogical context of the Lyceum, founded by Aristotle.

With the formal edition of Aristotle's works by Andronicus of Rhodes in the 1st century BC the genre of natural problems revived and gained in popularity even beyond the confines of the Lyceum.⁴ It became embedded also in the medical and in the Platonic tradition, as is marked by the production of new collections such as those attributed to Ps.-Alexander of Aphrodisias, Cassius the Iatrosophist and Plutarch of Chaeronea.⁵ The long-lasting popularity of the genre of natural problems is confirmed, moreover, by the fact that it flourished well beyond the

ère'. On the inextricable chronology of the Ps.-Aristotelian *Problems*, see also Flashar 1962, p. 356–358, who dates the substratum ('Grundschrift') of the work to around 250 BC.

⁴ Aristotle's *Problems* are mentioned by a variety of authors, such as Cicero, Strabo, Seneca, Pliny, Plutarch, Gellius, Apuleius, Galen and Athenaeus. See Louis 1991–1994, I, p. xxxi–xxxiii. These authors probably used the more voluminous edition by Andronicus of Rhodes, which was different not only from the original Aristotelian *Problems*, but also from the Ps.-Aristotelian collection we have today.

⁵ See Flashar 1962, p. 312–314 and Louis 1991–1994, I, p. xxx–xxxv. On Andronicus' edition, see, however, the 'dispiritingly sceptical' conclusions of Barnes 1997, p. 24–44 (with p. 1 for the quote). Ps.-Aristotle's collection of *Natural problems* in 38 'books' has recently been re-edited by Mayhew 2011. We also have three sets of *Supplementary problems*, which are variously attributed to Ps.-Aristotle and Ps.-Alexander. They have recently been re-edited by Kapetanaki & Sharples 2006. In addition, there are two sets of *Medical puzzles and natural problems* attributed to Ps.-Alexander. A new edition of this text is currently being prepared by Carl-Gustaf Lindqvist of the University of Göteborg, the forthcoming of which is, indeed, 'eagerly awaited' (to use the words of Kapetanaki & Sharples 2006, p. 1, n. 1). The text is also accessible in Ideler's 1841 edition (p. 3–80), where the two sets of *Medical difficulties and natural problems* by Cassius Felix, surnamed the Iatrosophist, are also recorded (p. 144–167). The problems of Cassius Felix have recently been re-edited by Garzya & Masullo 2004. Finally, we have Plutarch's *Table talk* (*Quaestiones convivales*) and *Causes of natural phenomena* (*Quaestiones naturales*). The most recent edition of the *Table talk* is by Bernardakis et al. 2011. For *Causes of natural phenomena* Sensazono's 2006 edition is the most recent one. See also Meeusen 2013a (with p. xxxv–xxxvi for a short review of Sensazono's work). For reasons of space, I only mention the most recent editions of Plutarch's works here, but several others are also available (in the Budé, Teubner and Loeb Classical Library series), including separate commentaries (see, e.g., Teodorsson 1989–1996, Meeusen 2013a).

chronological and geographical boundaries of Antiquity and the Occident. Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems* were very popular during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and they were also translated into Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew.⁶ Therefore, the relevance of the tradition of natural problems for the history of science is in sharp contrast to the general scholarly disinterest regarding its content and influence.⁷ The historical value of this tradition consists in its undeniable contribution to the study and understanding of natural phenomena and in its development of a certain method and terminology for approaching them, which finds firm footing in Aristotle's natural philosophical project that gave rise to it.

The contribution at hand will be concerned with the revival of the genre of natural problems in the Early Roman Empire, viz. in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, and more precisely with its reception by Plutarch, the famous philosopher and biographer of Chaeronea (c. 45–120 AD). Our main aim is to examine how especially Aristotle's authority (among that of others like the Presocratics, Theophrastus, etc.) is established and conserved in the Chaeronean's natural problems. We will see that Plutarch's scientific project is no faceless echolalia of traditional authorities, even if he clearly aims to continue the Aristotelian project of natural problems.⁸ We will examine, then, how

⁶ Generally useful here are Flashar 1962, p. 370–382, Blair 1999 and the contributions in De Leemans & Goyens 2006, with a selected bibliography at p. 295–317. See also esp. Lawn 1963 and Filius 1999.

⁷ For a compilation of modern disapproval (but sometimes also appreciation) of Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems*, see Flashar 1962, p. 377–378 (who himself at one point speaks of 'zusammenhanglosen Spezialuntersuchungen von geringer philosophischer Relevanz' (p. 358)). See, however, Mayhew 2011, I, p. xxiv: 'But if this work [sc. Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems*] receives the scholarly attention given to the rest of the *corpus Aristotelicum*, I believe it has much to tell us about the nature of intellectual activity in the Lyceum, especially after Aristotle'. Most useful and recent scholarship on Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems* is found in Centrone 2011 and Mayhew 2015.

⁸ Notably, at several occasions in his natural scientific treatises, Aristotle actually signals that further research should be done on certain topics, and it can be expected that it was up to his successors to fill in these gaps. In *GA* 5, 7, 786b11–12, for instance, the Stagirite writes that further investigation is required for the reasons of specific phenomena concerning the voice of animals (ἐπισκεπτέον διὰ τίνος αἰτίας ὑπάρχει τούτων ἕκαστον). As Mayhew 2011, I, p. 346 remarks, '[m]uch of Book 11 [of Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems*, entitled ὅσα

Plutarch at several points (either explicitly or implicitly) marks the creative and innovative character of his own contribution *vis-à-vis* the traditional, Aristotelian one.

2. The case of Plutarch of Chaeronea

2.1. Plutarch's natural problems

What is probably the most important feature of the above outline of the history and tradition of Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems* is the idea that we are dealing with a vast and essentially boundless corpus of zetetic materials that is open to continual textual evolution, reorganization and accumulation.⁹ The present section will show that an important feature of Plutarch's natural problems is the idea that they – in spite of Plutarch's personal adherence to Platonic philosophy – contribute to the Aristotelian paradigm, to which they add new problems or from which they revise older ones by looking for new solutions.¹⁰ From this perspective, one could perhaps think that Plutarch tried to inscribe himself in the Peripatetic tradition by discussing typically Aristotelian problems. We will see, however, that this theory requires further qualification as regards Plutarch's philosophical allegiance to become acceptable. An important question in light of the history of (natural) science and philosophy will then be how this openness towards Aristotle and Peripatetic science ties in exactly with Plutarch's Platonism.

περί φωνῆς] [...] seems to undertake part of such an investigation'. The same is true for Theophrastus' works. See Lloyd 1983, p. 113: 'Yet both Aristotle and Theophrastus themselves repeatedly insist on how much work still remains to be done. Such demands may take one or other of two forms. Most commonly in Aristotle the point is that observations have yet to be undertaken or are not yet complete. But both he and Theophrastus also quite frequently identify difficulties where there is a problem not just of inadequate data, but of inadequate theories or explanations'.

⁹ Cf. e.g. Sandbach 1982, p. 225 and Jacob 2004, p. 43. For the 'encyclopedic' feature of ancient problem literature (with a central focus on Plutarch's collections of *quaestiones*), see Oikonomopoulou 2013.

¹⁰ See e.g. Sandbach 1965, p. 138: 'As things are, we can say no more than that *Quaestiones Naturales* seem to be a compound, in unknown proportions, of traditional and newly adduced solutions'.

Plutarch discusses natural problems throughout his entire oeuvre: not only within the sympotic framework of *Quaestiones convivales*, where he at numerous occasions stages his own literary alter ego as an interlocutor in the sympotic discussions,¹¹ but also in an autonomous fashion in *Quaestiones naturales*¹² and in a number of scientific digressions (παρεκβάσεις) in the *Vitae*.¹³ Even though the direct literary contexts of the natural problems can, thus, clearly differ between the distinct 'genres', Plutarch's natural problems generally share a consistent approach to dealing with natural phenomena by finding their model in the Aristotelian *Problems*, with its particular formal, theoretical and terminological characteristics.¹⁴

Aristotle is among the most frequently quoted authorities in Plutarch's natural problems. In the analysis below of the Aristotelian passages, our focus will be restricted to the explicit (i.e. *nominatim*) quotations. One can very well imagine that an (exhaustive) analysis of these passages suffices to get a clear insight in the discursive strategies Plutarch employs for constructing the Stagirite's authority more generally. This means that numerous Aristotelian passages are not highlighted explicitly by Plutarch, but these cannot be incorporated in the analysis for reasons of space.¹⁵ Moreover, we will not primarily be concerned with the actual content of the Aristotelian passages, but rather with the techniques Plutarch uses for shaping the Stagirite's authority. This will, in turn, be balanced by an examination of the ways in which Plutarch's own authorial voice resonates in these passages.¹⁶

¹¹ On the intriguing authorial strategies of Plutarch's discursive self-promotion and self-effacement in *Quaestiones convivales*, see Klotz 2007 and König 2011.

¹² On the autonomy of *Quaestiones naturales*, see Meeusen 2013a, p. 46–49 and 98–101.

¹³ For a study of these digressions, see Desideri 1992 and Boulogne 2008.

¹⁴ For Peripatetic science in Plutarch's natural problems, see Sandbach 1982, Teodorsson 1999 and Oikonomopoulou 2011. See also Flashar 1962, p. 369–370.

¹⁵ See e.g. *Quaest. conv.* 6, 8, 695D and the parallel passage in *De prim. frig.* 949C: both passages concern the melting of lead whetstones in severe winters, but Plutarch explicitly mentions Aristotle as his source only in the latter passage (fr. 212 Rose).

¹⁶ For a separate case-study of Plutarch's argumentative creativity and originality in *Quaest. nat.* 19, 916BF, see Meeusen 2012a.

It may still be useful to provide a general account of the content of the Aristotelian passages, though. It will not come as a surprise that the source material Plutarch remoulds in his problems is mostly of a 'physical' kind, often containing specific physiological and biological materials.¹⁷ One of the main sources for Plutarch to draw on were, in fact, the Aristotelian *Problems*.¹⁸ Many explicit quotations from Aristotle can be retraced in the extant *Problems*, but there are also numerous allusions to it without Aristotle's name being mentioned.¹⁹ In addition, some of the explicit quotations would certainly qualify as deriving from the *Problems*, but they cannot be retraced in the extant Ps.-Aristotelian collection (or in other Aristotelian works), so that we are presumably dealing with excerpts from lost Aristotelian problems,²⁰ possibly originating from Andronicus' edition (this remains hypothetical, of course; see n. 4).²¹ The case is par-

¹⁷ The topics under discussion often tie in closely with a general sympotic framework, investigating issues concerning food, drinks, ceremonies, etc. The sympotic character of the problems is, of course, very obvious throughout *Quaestiones convivales*, but this is not so different in the case of *Quaestiones naturales*, even though the connection with a sympotic setting remains implicit at all times there. As Oikonomopoulou 2013, p. 310–311 has argued, Plutarch's natural problems 'do not emanate from a scientist's ivory tower, but are anchored in the economic and cultural parameters of practical life: agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, sea-faring, swimming, feasting and drinking. [...] Inspired by the physical reality of consumption at the symposium, they prompted the exploration of topics such as the origin, nutritional benefits, and cultural value of sympotic staples such as wine, bread, water, fish, meat and vegetables (which could then ramify into the investigation of broader natural phenomena). They were also the result of curiosity about the material dimension of objects used at the symposium, or seen in religious locations such as Delphi: vessels, musical instruments, statues or sculptures'.

¹⁸ In *Quaest. conv.* 1, 2, 616D, Aristotle's *Topics* are mentioned but only in passing.

¹⁹ See Capelle 1910, p. 329–330, n. 2: 'Unzweifelhaft sind aber solche "aristotelischen" Problemata noch an ungezählten Stellen von Plutarch, Gellius, Galen u.a. benutzt, wo der Name Aristoteles nicht genannt bzw. die Quelle verschwiegen wird'. See also Flashar 1962, p. 308 and 312–313. It should be noted, however, that the case can nowhere be determined conclusively for the allusive passages: after all, Plutarch may also be generally inspired by what Aristotle said. For a list of Plutarch's references to the *Problems*, see Helmbold & O'Neil 1959, p. 9–10, Flashar 1962, p. 369–370, Sandbach 1982, p. 223–225, Louis 1991–1994, I, p. xvi and xxxi–xxxii and Roskam 2011, p. 45–46.

²⁰ For fragments of problems that are now lost, see frs. 209–245 Rose. See also Flashar 1962, p. 313.

²¹ See Louis 1991–1994, I, p. xxxii.

ticularly intriguing when a quote from Aristotle actually contradicts a specific Aristotelian theory. In the fourth *causa* of *Quaest. nat.* 1, 911E, for instance, regarding the problem of why sea-water provides no nourishment to trees, Plutarch argues on the authority of Aristotle that sea-water has become undrinkable and bitter by an admixture of burnt earth (ἡ γέγονεν ἄποτον καὶ πικρὸν τὸ ὕδωρ, ὡς Ἀριστοτέλης φησὶν, ἀναμίζει κατακεκαυμένης γῆς). This may be a reference to *Mete.* 2, 3, 358a14–17, where Aristotle reports that some people ascribe the saltiness of sea-water to burnt earth (θάλατταν ἐκ κατακεκαυμένης φασὶ γενέσθαι γῆς). Aristotle himself, however, explicitly considers this ascription to be absurd (ἄποτον), but he concludes that the admixture of what he vaguely calls ‘such earthy stuff’ (ἐκ τοιαύτης <γῆς>) with the water is undoubtedly what makes the sea salty. We are possibly dealing here with a simplifying extrapolation by Plutarch,²² but it cannot be excluded that the Chaeronean actually relies on a lost Ps.-Aristotelian problem, where that precise theory was supported.²³ Several passages in the Ps.-Aristotelian *Problems* can in any case demonstrate that there is a tendency to restore specific theories that Aristotle explicitly rejected, thus reopening them for debate (in the Lyceum context).²⁴ The same seems to be the case here in Plutarch’s quotation. We should bear in mind, therefore, that many other Aristotelian quotes may very well originate from problems that are now lost, but this remains uncertain. Moreover, there is no reason to doubt that these quotes were all equally Aristotelian for Plutarch, even if we know today that they are not necessarily Aristotle’s (and, indeed, the *Problems* do not necessarily have to be by Aristotle to be considered generally Aristotelian).

²² See Senzasono 2006, p. 144, n. 7.

²³ See Sandbach 1982, p. 227 and Meeusen 2011, 351. In fact, hydrology is an important thematic category for the quotes of Aristotle in Plutarch’s natural problems (mostly in terms of sea-water and its physical constitution: see *Quaest. nat.* 1, 911E, 2, 912A, 12, 914F, *Quaest. conv.* 1, 9, 626E–627F). The same theme is central to the 23rd book of Ps.-Aristotle’s *Problems*, entitled ὅσα περὶ τὸ ἄλμυρὸν ὕδωρ καὶ θάλατταν.

²⁴ See Flashar 1962, 334–335. For instance, Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 23, 30, 934b34–36 reproduces an argument (from the Heracliteans) that is considered ridiculous in Arist., *Mete.* 2, 2, 354b33 (γελοῖοι πάντες ὅσοι κτλ.).

2.2. Plutarch's authorial strategies in the explicit Aristotelian passages

The fact that Plutarch and his peers were well acquainted with Aristotle's *Problems* is nicely illustrated in *Quaest. conv.* 8, 10, 734CD (= fr. 242 Rose), where we read that Lucius Mestrius Florus (Plutarch's Roman *patronus*) was engaged in reading a copy of this text and shared (μετεδίδου) it with his friends, thus confirming Aristotle's saying according to which great learning provides many starting-points (= fr. 62 Rose: τὴν πολυμάθειαν πολλὰς ἀρχὰς ποιεῖν). In what follows, we will, indeed, see how a specific Aristotelian problem serves as a starting-point (ἀρχή) for further debate. Interestingly, Plutarch writes that Florus was full of questions himself as is natural for a philosopher (αὐτός τε πολλῶν ἀποριῶν, ὅπερ εἰώθασι πάσχειν ἐπικεικῶς αἱ φιλόσοφοι φύσεις).²⁵ As a philosopher full of questions himself, Plutarch knows very well what he is talking about here. In accordance with his adherence to Plato and the Academic Sceptics, philosophy is, in fact, an essentially zetetic and aporetic search of the truth for him – an idea that is also implicitly present in the discussion that follows.²⁶

²⁵ Florus is called a φιλόμαχος in *Quaest. conv.* 7, 4, 702D. From a number of passages in *Quaestiones convivales* we learn that several others of Plutarch's fellow symposiasts also had particular interests in Aristotelian doctrines. In *Quaest. conv.* 8, 10, 734F, for instance, Plutarch writes that Favorinus is a most enthusiastic admirer of Aristotle and that he ascribes a very large share of probability to the Peripatos (δαιμονιώτατος Ἀριστοτέλους ἐραστής ἐστι καὶ τῷ Περιπάτῳ νέμει μερίδα τοῦ πιθανοῦ πλείστην); see below. A similar passage is found in *Quaest. conv.* 2, 2, 635B, where Plutarch's brother, Lamprias, is said to honour the Peripatos and the Lyceum before the Garden (πρὸ τοῦ κήπου κυδαίνονται τὸν περίπατον καὶ τὸ Λύκειον).

²⁶ See Opsomer 1998. The genre of problems covers a considerable share of Plutarch's entire literary production. The Lamprias catalogue lists several collections of Αἰτίαι, some of which are still extant, but others lost or only partially preserved: Αἰτίαι τῶν Ἀράτου Διοσημιῶν (nr. 119 = frs. 13–20 Sandbach), Αἰτίαι Ρωμαϊκαί (nr. 138 = *Quaestiones Romanae*), Αἰτίαι Βαρβαρικαί (nr. 139), Αἰτίαι τῶν περιφερομένων Στωικῶν (nr. 149; ἱστοριῶν? Sandbach), Αἰτίαι καὶ τόποι (nr. 160), Αἰτίαι ἀλλαγῶν (nr. 161), Αἰτίαι Ἑλλήνων (nr. 166 = *Quaestiones Graecae*), Αἰτίαι γυναικῶν (nr. 167 = nr. 126 (Γυναικῶν ἀρεταί = *Mulierum virtutes*)? Nachstädt) and Αἰτίαι φυσικαί (nr. 218 = *Quaestiones naturales*). *Quaestiones convivales* is not recorded in the Lamprias catalogue. The Πλατωνικὰ ζητήματα (nr. 136) and Απορίων λύσεις (nr. 170) can be added. See also Harrison 2000, p. 195.

Plutarch notes that Aristotle's problems provided him and his peers with pleasant conversation during the daytime strolls (οὐκ ἄχαριν ἡμῖν ἐν τοῖς περιπάτοις διατριβὴν παρέσχευ),²⁷ but that the problem of why dreams are especially unreliable in fall came up, one way or another, after a dinner hosted by Florus. A lively description of the discussion then follows, where Aristotle's authority takes a central – albeit not monopolizing – position. Notably, Aristotle's explanation serves as a starting-point (ἀρχή) for further discussion in this problem. Plutarch's sons thought that Aristotle had already solved the problem and that there is nothing left to investigate or discuss except as to blame the harvest, as Aristotle had done (= fr. 242 Rose: ἐδόκει λελυκέναι τὴν ἀπορίαν Ἀριστοτέλης, καὶ οὐδὲν ᾤοντο δεῖν ζητεῖν οὐδὲ λέγειν ἀλλ' ἢ τοὺς καρπούς, ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνος, αἰτιάσθαι). Teodorsson notes that '[t]his etiology is not found in our *Corpus Aristotelicum*', which may imply that we are dealing with the remains of a lost problem here.²⁸ What is perhaps more important, however, is that the symposiasts do not simply take Aristotle's theory for granted, but take it as a sound basis (ἀρχή) for further discussion. In what follows, Favorinus (the famous philosopher from Arelate), gives an alternative solution for the problem by advancing the old Democritean theory (λόγον τινὰ τοῦ Δημοκρίτου παλαιόν = DK68A77) of the spectral films (εἰδῶλα).²⁹ Autobulus (one of Plutarch's sons) is not convinced of Favorinus' explanation, though, and criticizes it as an attempt to approve Aristotle's theory by placing that of Democritus beside it as a shadow,

²⁷ The pun is in the word *περίπατος*, i.e. a stroll often after dinner or after a lecture as it was traditionally made in the Lyceum/Peripatos. For the *περίπατος* as an emblematic occupation of Peripatetic philosophers, see e.g. *De Al. Magn. fort.* 328A, where ἐν Λυκείῳ περίπατον συνέχειν is opposed to ἐν Ἀκαδημείᾳ θέσεις λέγειν. Cf. also *Alex.* 7, 4: Ἀριστοτέλους ὑποσκήτους περιπάτους. For further references, see Meeusen 2013a, p. 120, n. 27 and 28.

²⁸ Teodorsson 1989–1996, III, p. 283. The argument goes that fresh fruit and grain produce much breath and upset in the body, which in turn causes bad dreams. Teodorsson notes that Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 1, 25, 862b5 only mentions that fresh fruit may disturb the digestion.

²⁹ These spectral films emanate from everything, so Favorinus argues, viz. from utensils, clothes, plants, animals, but also from man's mental impulses, designs, moral qualities and emotions, and they penetrate the body of the recipient and communicate with him. In autumn the air is uneven, so that the clarity of the spectral films diminishes, and this has the same effect on our dreams.

whereupon he decides to personally confront Aristotle's theory and to contest it (735C: οὐ γὰρ ἀγνοοῦμεν, ὅτι τὴν Ἀριστοτέλους δόξαν εὐδοκιμῆσαι βουλόμενος ὥσπερ σκιὰν αὐτῇ τὴν Δημοκρίτου παραβέβληκας, ἐπ' ἐκείνην οὖν τρεψόμεθα κάκεινῃ μαχούμεθα).³⁰

Interestingly, Plutarch describes Favorinus as a most enthusiastic admirer of Aristotle who ascribes a very large share of plausibility to the Peripatos (δαιμονιώτατος Ἀριστοτέλους ἐραστής ἐστι καὶ τῷ Περιπάτῳ νέμει μερίδα τοῦ πιθανοῦ πλείστην, see n. 25). The notion of plausibility (τὸ πιθανόν) is a very significant epistemic concept in Plutarch's method of natural scientific inquiry. It is well-known that Plato in the *Timaeus* gives probabilistic reasoning an important place within the field of natural philosophy.³¹ The association of this notion (τὸ πιθανόν) with Aristotelian philosophy and the Peripatos more generally, then, is highly suggestive for the epistemic range of the natural problems Plutarch is dealing with. It implies that the study of natural phenomena, and more precisely of Aristotelian natural problems, is situated on the level of plausibility, for Plutarch, and cannot attain the level of certainty. Persuasion by means of plausible arguments is, in fact, an essential feature of Plutarch's natural scientific discourse, but it should be noted that this is not just a rhetorical strategy that aims at convincing a person of one's own right, as it also ties in with Plutarch's underlying scientific method, which

³⁰ Autobulus rejects Aristotle's theory by pointing out that fruits that are consumed in summer and in late autumn are ripe and at the very moment of turning, and that in the months that are close to winter fruits have already lost their upsetting and frenzy-inducing quality, so that people have less deceptive dreams. He then gives his own explanation and argues that late autumn, with its combination of dry and cold, renders the human body susceptible to disease, and that the soul shares the body's experience, especially when the vital breath is congealed, so that we do not have clear dreams.

³¹ In this Platonic dialogue, *Timaeus* famously describes his own account as an εἰκὼς λόγος ('likely account') or an εἰκὼς μῦθος ('likely story': e.g., *Tim.* 29d), which is often interpreted in light of Plato's study of physics more generally. According to F. M. Cornford, 1937, p. 28–29 (see also p. 28–32 more generally) this implies 'that there can be no exact, or even self-consistent, science of Nature. [...] There is [...] no exact truth to which our account of physical things can ever hope to approximate'. See also more recently D. J. Zeyl, 2000, p. xxxii–xxxiii (p. xxxii: 'Probably what Plato means is that *within the constraints in which the story must be told* something like this account is the most plausible one can hope for.'), T. K. Johansen 2004, M. F. Burnyeat 2009 and L. Brisson 2012.

calls for an aporetic stance in investigations pertaining to the natural world.³² No wonder, then, that the symposiasts in general attempt to communicate plausible theories and explanations without formulating any final judgment (*ἐποχή*). Moreover, Plutarch makes it absolutely clear that a number of alternative theories can succeed each other and can even 'co-exist', at least in the sense that they each contain a certain aspect of plausibility.

The discussion at hand also shows that several basic attitudes towards a specific Aristotelian theory are possible. On the positive side of the spectrum, Aristotle's traditional explanation can either be confirmed by simply reproducing it or expanded by adding an alternative theory that still supports it, whereas on the negative side, it can be attacked by providing a fully alternative theory that criticizes it. By using the literary *personae* of his sympotic peers (i.e. his closest relatives and acquaintances) as *porte-paroles* in the discussion, Plutarch (as an author) intends to combine these diametrically opposed argumentative strategies in order to exploit the aetiological potential as much as possible (the attempt to combine both a positive and a negative approach is reminiscent of the *disputatio in utramque partem* that was a common educational practice in the schools of rhetoric and philosophy). The dialogical aspect of the sympotic discussion, thus, serves as a useful tool for balancing positive and negative, as well as traditional and innovative accounts, where the aspect of plausibility functions as a structural criterion in the development of the aetiology.³³ The fact that a traditional, Aristotelian theory serves as a starting-point (*ἀρχή*) in the debate and functions as a first step in the search of an ultimately correct explanation (which eventually remains beyond the Chaeronean's epistemic grasp, though) is highly significant for the discursive construc-

³² On the aspects of plausibility and probability in Plutarch's natural problems, see Kechagia 2011, p. 99–104 and Meeusen 2013a, p. 222–228. Cf. e.g. Plu., *De tuenda* 133E: πολλὰ μὲν ἐστὶ τῶν φυσικῶν προβλημάτων ἐλαφρὰ καὶ πιθανά (with discussion in Meeusen 2013a, p. 123ff.).

³³ The dialogical character of the genre of problems and its lack of argumentative closure can be interpreted in light of Plutarch's zetetic and explorative attitude in philosophical debate. See Van der Stockt 2000 and Opsomer 2010, p. 115.

tion of the Stagirite's authority, marking the intellectual value Plutarch ascribes to it at a structural level.

A most relevant passage to illustrate the importance of traditional knowledge as a starting-point in the debate is found in *Quaest. conv.* 6, 8, 694D, where the symposiasts are looking for the cause of βουλιμία ('ox-hunger'). This problem is treated in Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 8, 9, 887b38–888a23, where the same processes as found in Plutarch's explanation are central. Most relevant for us is that Plutarch (after an introduction of the problem) in an interior monologue reflects on the importance of argumentative creativity in the context of zetetic inquiry. Plutarch very seldom uses this technique of interior monologue, as attested here, which certainly highlights the importance of the passage at issue.³⁴

Γενομένης δὲ σιωπῆς, ἐγὼ συννοῶν ὅτι τὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἐπιχειρήματα τοὺς μὲν ἄργους καὶ ἀφυσίς οἷον ἀναπαύει καὶ ἀναπύμπλησι, τοῖς δὲ φιλοτίμοις καὶ φιλολόγοις ἀρχὴν ἐνδίδωσιν οἰκείαν καὶ τόλμαν ἐπὶ τὸ ζητεῖν καὶ ἀνιχνεύειν τὴν ἀλήθειαν

There was a silence during which I reflected that it suits the dull and unschooled to accept and be full of the solutions provided by our predecessors, whereas to the ambitious and learned it provides a familiar beginning and an encouragement to search and track down the truth.

The idea that traditional knowledge is a beginning (ἀρχή) for zetetic discussions may very well be an echo of Aristotle's quote in *Quaest. conv.* 8, 10, 734D, according to which great learning provides many starting-points (= fr. 62 Rose: τὴν πολυμάθειαν πολλὰς ἀρχὰς ποιεῖν, see above). In what follows, Plutarch matches the action to the word. He first brings Aristotle's account to mind (ἐμνήσθην τῶν Ἀριστοτελικῶν), where the cause of the disease (of βουλιμία) is found in the processes of heating and colligation. The discussion then proceeds, some persons attacking Aristotle's theory, others advocating it, and this is only *reasonable*, so Plutarch writes (Ὅπερ οὖν εἰκός, τοῦ λόγου λεχθέντος ἐπεραίνετο, τῶν μὲν ἐπιφυομένων τῷ δόγματι τῶν δ' ὑπερδικοούντων). The emphasis on

³⁴ See Teodorsson 1989–1996, II, p. 289: 'This example of inner soliloquy is unique in the *Talks* and rare in Ancient literature on the whole'.

εἰκός here, implies that the continuation of the discussion by the formation of two camps (*disputatio in utramque partem*) is a logical consequence in the context of sympotic debate. Those symposiasts advocating Aristotle will have to come up with new arguments against those attacking him. This clearly indicates, then, that traditional, Aristotelian knowledge only provides an incentive (ἀρχή) for discussion (as was, indeed, noted in the interior monologue) and should not simply be taken for granted.

This is not to downgrade the overall value of received, Aristotelian knowledge either, of course. In *Quaest. conv.* 3, 7, 655D–656B, for instance, the problem at issue is why γλεῦκος ('must'; i.e. sweet, new wine) is least intoxicating. Hagias and Aristaenetus, two young philosophers, make their own attempt at an explanation, and their ingenuity is heartily approved by the group, because, so Plutarch writes, they did not fall upon the evident arguments but attained their personal explanations (Σφόδρ' οὖν ἀπεδεξάμεθα τὴν εὐρησιλογίαν τῶν νεανίσκων, ὅτι τοῖς ἐμποδῶν οὐκ ἐπιπεσόντες ἰδίων ὑπόρησαν ἐπιχειρημάτων).³⁵ This does not withhold Plutarch from also adding some arguments which he describes as at hand and easy to comprehend, though: these are the heaviness of the wine, which, as Aristotle (presumably in one of his lost problems)³⁶ says, breaks through the stomach, and the large quantity of breathlike and watery substances that are mixed with the wine (= fr. 220 Rose: ἐπεὶ τὰ γε πρόχειρα καὶ ῥάδια λαβεῖν ἢ τε βαρύτερης ἐστὶ τοῦ γλεύκους, ὡς Ἀριστοτέλης φησίν, ἢ διακόπτουσα τὴν κοιλίαν, καὶ τὸ πολὺν συμμεμιγμένον πνευματῶδες καὶ ὕδατῶδες). Plutarch thus shows that the formulation of personal ingenuities should not necessarily go at the cost of mentioning also the more obvious, traditional (i.e. Aristotelian) explanations,

³⁵ Hagias argues that the excessive sweetness of the wine prevents people from drinking a quantity that is sufficient for intoxication, and Aristaenetus that the sweetness blunts the intoxicating effects of the wine – he remembers that he read this in 'some writings' (ἐν τισιν ἐνίοις γράμμασιν ἀνεγνωκῶς ἔφη μνημονεύειν). Scholars argue that this is an implicit reference to Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 872b32–873a4 (see Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 370). Perhaps Aristotle's name is not mentioned explicitly as Aristaenetus' source, here, in order to (falsely) underline the aspect of *personal* ingenuity in his argument.

³⁶ See Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 371. Mayhew 2011, I, p. 111, n. 23 draws a parallel between *Quaest. conv.* 3, 7, 655E and Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 3, 12 and 3, 25a.

seeing that these also bear direct relevance to the discussion at hand and to its search for plausible explanations.

This point is made very clear in the following problem (in *Quaest. conv.* 3, 8, 656C), where Plutarch's father continues the discussion about wine. Now that they have disturbed Aristotle (παρακεκινήκαμεν τὸν Ἀριστοτέλη), so Plutarch's father says, he invites his fellow symposiasts to say something of their own (τι ἴδιον ἐπιχειρήσομεν εἰπεῖν) on the subject of the so-called tipsy. The problem is that these are more deranged than very drunk people (parallels are found for this problem in Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 3, 2, 871a8–16 and 3, 27, 875a29–40). Before reproducing the Stagirite's explanation, which boils down to the idea that tipsy people judge badly because they follow illusory appearances, Plutarch's father remarks that, even though Aristotle is normally very sharp in such investigations, he does not seem to have examined the cause of the problem at issue with precision (οὐ γὰρ ἱκανῶς μοι δοκεῖ, καίπερ ὀξύτατος ὢν ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις ζητήμασι, διηκριβωκέναι τὴν αἰτίαν).³⁷ On his father's request, Plutarch then examines Aristotle's explanation and concludes that it is sufficient, in his opinion, as far as causality is concerned (ἀποχρῶν οὗτος ἦν πρὸς τὴν αἰτίαν ὁ λόγος). Nevertheless, he still feels prompted to add something of his own (ἴδιόν τι), which he, indeed, does in what follows. What we learn from this discussion, then, is that a physical (i.e. Aristotelian) explanation can apparently attain a certain level of sufficiency (ἀποχρῶν) from a causal perspective, but that this does not preclude the formulation of yet other physical explanations – the search for plausibility being the only epistemological criterion in this process.

The emphasis on the ἴδιόν τι, as a personal contribution to the sympotic picnic of arguments, is in fact a genuine τόπος throughout *Quaestiones convivales*. Plutarch's sympotic protocol prescribes

³⁷ Aristotle is also explicitly complimented on his natural scientific acumen at the end of *Quaest. nat.* 40 (= Psellus, *De omn. doct.* 170), where his authority is adduced regarding the problem of why brine bursts forth from the sea when a thunderbolt falls in it. The author remarks that Aristotle approves of the given explanation (according to which the thunderbolt solidifies the salt in the sea-water) *as do the better natural scientists* (= fr. 218 Rose: ταύτην τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ὁ φιλόσοφος ἀποδέχεται καὶ οἱ κρείττους τῶν φυσικῶν). On the disputed authenticity of *Quaest. nat.* 40–41, see Meeusen 2013a, p. 356 and 2012b more generally.

that every guest should actively contribute to the sympotic discussion by sharing his personal opinion on a specific topic with the group. Scholars have underlined the rhetorical dynamics behind the problems under discussion in *Quaestiones convivales*, stressing the fact that they provide an agonistic (but – considering convivial protocols – always amusing and friendly) framework for rhetorical demonstration and the ingenious display of multifarious παιδεία.³⁸ The interlocutors generally attempt to show off their knowledge of traditional authorities in combination with their proficiency to remodel this knowledge in an original fashion to the always new problem contexts. The eventual goal of the active participation by each symposiast is, as Plutarch himself sporadically indicates, to strengthen the group's sense of communality (κοινωνία), which is generally taken by contemporary scholars as an implicit attempt to confirm and consolidate the socio-intellectual unity of the Greek elite class, to which Plutarch and his peers belonged.³⁹

At times, this sympotic interaction has a somewhat meta-reflective dimension, dealing with the concrete reality and circumstances of sympotic events. In *Quaest. conv.* 8, 3, 720C–722F, for instance, a dinner party is taking place in Athens in the house of Ammonius (Plutarch's teacher), who is in office as στρατηγός for the third time at the moment of the discussion. When a crowd suddenly starts shouting in front of the house and causes disturbance, Ammonius asks his servants to send the people away. Once this is done, the symposiasts calmly discuss a problem that certainly suits the present occasion, viz. why those indoor clearly hear people shouting outdoors, while persons outside do not hear those inside in a similar way. Ammonius says that Aristotle had already solved the problem (τοῦτο μὲν ὑπ' Ἀριστοτέλους λελύσθαι) by arguing that when the voice of people inside is carried outside and spread in a large quantity of air it

³⁸ See e.g. König 2007 and Van der Stockt 2011.

³⁹ See e.g. Van der Stockt 2000, p. 94 and Frazier & Sirinelli 1996, p. 180ff. This personal contribution to the discussion is considered a συμβολή ('tax'), i.e. some kind of an intellectual 'entrance-fee' to the dinner. See LSJ, s.v. iv. Cf. *Quaest. conv.* 4, 2, 664D, 4, 4, 668D, 5, 7, 682A, 6, 8, 694B, 8, 2, 719EF. Cf. also Gell., *NA* 7, 13: *ne omnino, ut dicitur, immunes et asymboli ueniremus, coniectabamus ad cenulam non cuppedias ciborum, sed argutias quaestionum.*

is obscured and scattered, whereas the voice that comes from outside and moves inside, is not so affected but remains intact and comprehensible (this problem is discussed in Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 11, 37, 903b13–18).⁴⁰ Ammonius continues, however, that what needs further explanation (ἐκεῖνο δὲ μᾶλλον λόγου δεῖσθαι) is the fact that sounds carry better at night (than by day), and that they, in addition to their magnitude, also preserve their clearness. As such, it is not so much Aristotle's explanation, but rather the initial Aristotelian problem as a whole that serves as a trigger for the formulation of a new, but much related problem. Clearly, then, the circumstances of the symposium can serve as a catalyst for the invention of suitable subjects of discussion.⁴¹ Ammonius

⁴⁰ Aristotle is quoted again regarding the perception of sounds in *Quaest. conv.* 7, 5, 704EF, where the symposiasts discuss why and how one should guard against the pleasures derived from degenerate music. Callistratus rejects the Stagirite's argument for exempting the delights of sight and sound from charges of incontinence (ἀκρασία). The Stagirite's argument is that these types of sensory delight alone are human, while animals are capable by nature to experience also the others (viz. the delights of touch and taste) and share in them (δοκεῖ δέ μοι μηδ' Ἀριστοτέλης αἰτία δικαία τὰς περὶ θεῶν καὶ ἀκρόασιν εὐπαθείας ἀπολύειν ἀκρασίας, ὥς μόνας ἀνθρωπικὰς οὐσας, ταῖς δ' ἄλλαις καὶ τὰ θηρία φύσιν ἔχοντα χρῆσθαι καὶ κοινωνεῖν). Aristotle proposes such an argument at greater length in *EN* 3, 10, 1117b23–1118b8, where he states that temperance and licentiousness (ἡ σωφροσύνη καὶ ἡ ἀκολασία) concern those pleasures in which animals also share (that is touch and taste). If the reference is, indeed, to this passage, we are clearly dealing with a condensed reformulation of the original argument – but again the reference to a lost problem cannot be excluded (cf. Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 28, 7, 949b37–950a17; on the broadly ethical content in Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems*, see Flashar 1962, p. 317). Moreover, some of the examples that follow after Callistratus' reference to Aristotle have obvious parallels in the Stagirite's zoological treatises, viz. the beliefs that stags are bewitched by flutes (*HA* 8, 5, 611b26) and that horned owls are caught while imitating a person's dancing (frs. 354–355 Rose; originating from Aristotle's *Περὶ ὀρνίθων*). We thus see that Aristotle's statement is disproved with some of his own zoological accounts.

⁴¹ This slightly modifies the interpretation of Teodorsson 1989–1996, III, p. 182: 'Ammonius interrupts the discussion: the problem has been solved already and need not be discussed any more. This is a rather strange assertion, seeing that otherwise a "solution" given by the ancients is expressly made the starting-point for a discussion. [...] Ammonius' suggestion of the subject is a typical result of the incident, the shouting outside. There are numerous examples of such reactions in the *Talks*; cf. 615C, 620A, 635E, 638B, 640B, 641B, 642F, 645D, 653B, 657F, 660D, 664B, 666D, 693D, 696E, 714A, 717B, 725F. Such connections between the situation and the subject discussed must not necessarily be regarded as literary commonplaces [...]. Incidents and episodes that are likely to happen at symposia may well have happened at many of the occasions described by Plut'. It should be added, however, that the connection between

certainly proves to be a good *συμποσίαρχος*, since he manages to organize the symposium in an orderly fashion by raising suitable topics for discussion. In his capacity as *στρατηγός*, moreover, he also restores order outside of the *ἀνδρῶν* by calming down the angry crowd in front of his house. As such, Plutarch here represents his teacher as quite a natural-born leader, who is capable of demonstrating his leadership on two fronts at the same time: Ammonius' political and intellectual authority clearly coincide in this passage.

From several passages throughout *Quaestiones convivales* we learn more about which qualities a good *συμποσίαρχος* should have: he should, for instance, know his guests in terms of their physical and intellectual dispositions, viz. how much they can drink, their character, and – most importantly – their particular field of expertise.⁴² In view of the socio-intellectual objective of Plutarch's ideal symposium, moderate consumption of wine is, in fact, approved for its capacity to stimulate friendly interaction. No wonder, then, that the topic of wine and wine drinking in itself was a popular point of debate at Plutarch's table (as our discussion above of *Quaest. conv.* 3, 7–8 has already shown). Aristotle is often invoked as an expert on this topic – and for good reason, since this theme generally draws on the third book of Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems* (entitled *ὅσα περὶ οἶνοποσίαν καὶ μέθην*).⁴³ In *Quaest. conv.* 3, 3, 650AB, for instance, Florus is amazed that

the sympotic discussions and the sympotic circumstances is not always clear (cf. e.g. *Quaest. conv.* 8, 10, 734DE, where the discussion about dreams came up 'one way or another' during a symposium: τὸ δὲ λεγόμενον περὶ τῶν ἐνυπνίων [...], οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἐφ' ἑτέροις λόγοις πραγματευσαμένου τοῦ Φαβωρίνου μετὰ τὸ δειπνον ἀνέκλυεν). Moreover, the aspect of historicity in the *Quaestiones convivales* is an important point of scholarly debate. Perhaps the most satisfactory conclusion was reached by Titchener 2009, p. 398–399 (cf. also 2011, p. 39), who notes that 'the QC do not need to be authentic to be real and true': 'What the QC present us with is something a little in between: what at least conveys the texture of what MIGHT have happened, COULD have happened, and periodically HAD in fact happened. For Plutarch's purposes, this is really all the same thing [...]'. See also Meeusen 2013a, p. 88–91.

⁴² Cf. e.g. *Quaest. conv.* 1, 1, 613DE, 1, 4, 621A, 2, 10, 643C and 644D.

⁴³ The theme of wine and drunkenness is a very important thematic category in Plutarch's problems (it recurs in *Quaest. conv.* 1, 6–7; 3, 3, 5, 7–9; 5, 3–4; 6, 7; 7, 3, 9–10 and in *Quaest. nat.* 10, 27, 30–31). In the prologue to the first book of *Quaestiones convivales* (612D) Plutarch actually mentions Aristotle among the coryphaei of the sympotic genre. The Stagirite is, indeed, known for

Aristotle in his *Περὶ μέθης* (= fr. 108 Rose) did not elaborate the explanation (τὴν αἰτίαν οὐκ ἐξειργάσατο) for the problem that old men are most susceptible to drunkenness and women least. He notes that it was not Aristotle's habit to pass over such problems (μηδὲν εἰωθὼς προῖσθαι τῶν τοιούτων), and decides to present the problem to the group in order to examine it (προὔβαλεν ἐν μέσῳ σκοπεῖν).⁴⁴ Obviously, providing a personal contribution is the only option when a specific problem has not yet been explained, but this contribution does not necessarily have to be conceived *ex nihilo*. Sulla, one of the guests, makes an attempt to explain the problem by arguing that the nature of women is opposite to that of old men (ἐναντίας γὰρ εἶναι μάλιστα τὰς φύσεις).⁴⁵ Part of Sulla's account about women is explicitly borrowed from Aristotle (ἔστι δέ τι καὶ παρ' αὐτοῦ λαβεῖν Ἀριστοτέλους), who holds, so we read, that persons who drink at a gulp without drawing breath – which the ancients called ἀμυστίζειν ('drinking at one draught') – become least drunk, because the wine does not remain in them but passes through their body, being thrust out by the rush of the wine; Sulla adds that we usually see women drinking in this way (ἐπιεικῶς δὲ τὰς γυναῖκας ὁρώμεν οὕτω πινούσας). The discussion at hand demonstrates how the symposiasts attempt to complete what Aristotle left unsolved. In doing so, they not only demonstrate their close acquaintance with Aristotelian knowledge but also show their ability to deal with it in an original fashion, i.e. by applying a specific Aristotelian theory to an unsolved Aristotelian problem. Scholars have argued that the Aristotelian account about ἀμυστίζειν probably originates from Aristotle's *Περὶ μέθης*.⁴⁶ This may very well be true, but what is more important for us is the fact that this pas-

having composed a *Συμπόσιον ἢ περὶ μέθης*, which is preserved only in fragmentary form (see frs. 99–111 Rose).

⁴⁴ According to Athen., *Deipn.* 10, 429C (= fr. 107 Rose) Aristotle did, however, give a partial explanation for this problem, arguing that older men have less and weaker natural heat (cf. also *Suppl. probl.* 2, 36). See Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 327.

⁴⁵ Women have a moist temperament so that the wine is overcome by the large amount of liquid, whereas old men have a dry and earthy condition, so that their body takes up the wine like a sponge.

⁴⁶ See Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 329: 'The notice on ἀμυστίζειν seems to indicate that our passage may be a fragment of *Περὶ μέθης*'.

sage shows how received, Aristotelian material is remoulded into new arguments for older problems. This is a nice illustration, then, of Plutarch's argumentative creativity in lifting traditional material from its original context in order to incorporate it in a new context, where it often plays a new role. Plutarch's custom to lift specific accounts (both prosaic and poetic) from their original contexts is widely attested throughout his entire oeuvre and testifies to his urge and ability to use the available sources in an original and ingenious fashion, where a simple reproduction is deliberately avoided.⁴⁷ Some further examples may be useful to illustrate Plutarch's peculiar method of citing.

1. A similar strategy is employed, for instance, in *Quaest. conv.* 6, 9, 696D, where Plutarch on the authority of Aristotle writes that wine is difficult to remove from garments when it is mixed, because it is more delicate and enters the pores more easily (καὶ γὰρ οἶνον κεκραμένον δυσχερέστερον ἐξαιροῦσι τῶν ἱματίων, ὡς Ἀριστοτέλης φησὶν, ὅτι λεπτότερός ἐστι καὶ μᾶλλον ἐνδύεται τοῖς πόροις). This account is found at the end of an argument, where it supports the difficulty of removing oil from clothes (cf. also *Quaest. conv.* 1, 9, 627C). A clear parallel can be found in Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 3, 22, 874a29–31, albeit in a different context. The problem at issue there is why people suffer more from hangovers when they drink well-mixed wine than when they drink unmixed wine.⁴⁸ If the reference is, indeed, to this passage, Plutarch is recycling a specific Aristotelian theory into a new problem context, again by a process of aetiological analogy.
2. To give another example, in *Quaest. conv.* 3, 10, 659D, Plutarch discusses the wholesome and astringent qualities of bronze. Among the authorities that he quotes is Aristotle, on whose account Plutarch argues that wounds from

⁴⁷ For further details on Plutarch's method of citing in *Quaestiones convivales*, see König 2010, esp. p. 339–345 and Oikonomopoulou 2013, p. 291 (who aptly speaks of 'a creative sort of "plagiarism"' for the more allusive passages). See also Bréchet 2007 more generally.

⁴⁸ Cf. also Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 3, 3, 871a17–20 and 3, 14, 873a9–10. According to Teodorsson 1989–1996, II, p. 298, the reference may be to a lost Aristotelian collection of *Problems*, but the parallelism between both passages is actually quite striking.

bronze spear-heads and swords are less painful and heal more easily than those from an iron weapon, because bronze has something medicinal in itself which is immediately left on impact (Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ καὶ τὰ τραύματά φησιν τὰ ἀπὸ τῶν χαλκῶν ἐπιδορατίδων καὶ μαχαιρῶν ἥττον εἶναι δυσαλγῆ καὶ ῥᾶον ἰᾶσθαι τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ σιδήρου διὰ τὸ φαρμακῶδες ἔχειν τι τὸν χαλκὸν ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ τοῦτο ταῖς πληγαῖς εὐθὺς ἐναπολείπειν). A parallel can be found in Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 1, 35, 863a25–31, regarding the problem of why people heal more easily when cut with bronze than with iron (Διὰ τί, ἐὰν χαλκῷ τις τμηθῇ, ῥᾶον ὑγιαίνεται ἢ σιδήρῳ;). As Mayhew notes, the allusion is to bronze *surgical tools* there (as is also the case in the previous problem in Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 1, 34, 863a19–24: Ποῖα τέμνειν δεῖ κτλ.).⁴⁹ Indeed, the first book of Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems*, in which these problems are found, specifically deals with medical issues (it is entitled *ὅσα ἰατρικά*).⁵⁰ In Plutarch's problem, however, reference is made to bronze *weapons*. It is not unlikely, therefore, that Plutarch isolates Aristotle's account from *Probl.* 1, 35 by neglecting its connection with the previous problem.⁵¹ This is not, in any case, exceptional for Plutarch's general method of citing, as

⁴⁹ Mayhew 2011, I, p. 34–35, n. 45.

⁵⁰ In two other medical-physiological contexts, Plutarch refers to Aristotle for more anecdotic (rather than aetiological) purposes. In his description of Lysander's character (*Lys.* 2, 5), Plutarch refers to Aristotle's account of melancholy. We read that great natures like those of Socrates, Plato, Hercules and Lysander (later on in his life) suffered from this condition (Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ τὰς μεγάλας φύσεις ἀποφαίνων μελαγχολικάς, ὡς τὴν Σωκράτους καὶ Πλάτωνος καὶ Ἡρακλέους, ἱστορεῖ καὶ Λύσανδρον οὐκ εὐθύς, ἀλλὰ πρεσβύτερον ὄντα τῇ μελαγχολίᾳ περιπεσεῖν). The reference is probably to Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 30, 1, 953a, where the same names are mentioned as in Plutarch's account (also noted by Flacelière & Chambry 1971, p. 316). In *Quaest. conv.* 8, 9, 733C, on the other hand, we encounter a passage from Aristotle's dialogue *Εὐδημος ἡ περὶ ψυχῆς*. Regarding the problem of whether it is possible for new diseases to arise and why, Plutarch there refers to Aristotle's account about Timon's grandmother, who used to hibernate in Cilicia for two months every year, giving no sign of life except from breathing (= fr. 43 Rose: τὴν δὲ Τίμωνος ἐν Κιλικίᾳ τήθην Ἀριστοτέλης ἰστόρηκεν φωλεύειν τοῦ ἔτους ἐκάστου δύο μῆνας, μηδενὶ πλὴν μόνῳ τῷ ἀναπνεῖν ὅτι ζῇ διάδηλον οὖσαν).

⁵¹ Cf. Flashar 1962, p. 409: 'Eine solche Auffassung des Problems ist aber nur möglich, wenn man es isoliert ohne Rücksicht auf den Zusammenhang betrachtet'. Then again, it cannot be excluded that Plutarch is perhaps referring to a lost problem where reference was, indeed, made to bronze weapons, but this seems unlikely considering the clear parallelism between both passages.

we just saw, since he more often gives a twist to the source material by reinterpreting it in a new context. In this case, the reference to Aristotle does not so much illustrate Plutarch's incorrect use of sources but rather marks his creativity in giving them a new semantic appropriation.

3. Plutarch does not seem to show tremendous concern for precision when quoting traditional authorities, as he often renders the original text in his own words.⁵² A nice example can be found in *Quaest. nat.* 21, 917D, where Plutarch discusses a zoological problem, viz. why domesticated sows farrow more than once and at various moments, while wild sows farrow only once and almost all during the same period of days (Διὰ τί τῶν ὤων αἱ μὲν ἡμέροι πλεονάκις τίκτουσι καὶ κατ' ἄλλον ἄλλαι χρόνον, αἱ δ' ἄγριαι καὶ ἅπαξ καὶ περὶ τὰς αὐτὰς ἅπασαι σχεδὸν ἡμέρας;). In the fourth and final *causa* Plutarch wonders whether Aristotle's account is true, according to which Homer (*Il.* 9, 539) gives the name of χλούνης to the boar that has only *one* testicle, and that the testicles of most get crushed through their rubbing themselves against tree-stumps (ἢ καὶ τὸ λεγόμενον ὑπ' Ἀριστοτέλους ἀληθές ἐστιν, ὅτι 'χλούνην' Ὅμηρος ὠνόμασε σὺν τὸν μόνορχιν; τῶν γὰρ πλείστων φησὶ προσκνωμένων τοῖς στελέχεσι θρύπτεσθαι τοὺς ὄρχεις).⁵³ Such an account is found in *HA* 6, 28, 578a32–b5, where Aristotle quotes the same Homeric passage and explains that young boars catch a disease that causes itching of the testicles. To stop the irritation, they scratch their testicles against trees and damage them, which results in *full* castration (τομίας). Most notably, Plutarch changes τομίας ('fully castrated') into μόνορχις ('with

⁵² See Russell 1980, p. 14: 'Plutarch's quotations and allusions are often loose and inexact'.

⁵³ Another passage that originates from Aristotle's zoological writings is found in *Quaest. conv.* 8, 7, 727EF, where the symposiasts discuss the Pythagorean precept not to receive a swallow as guest in the house. Reference is made to the bird's carnivorous nature. According to Aristotle, so Plutarch argues, the swallow flies close to the ground, hunting small and tiny creatures (= fr. 353 Rose: καὶ πρόσγειος αὐτῆς ἡ πτήσις ἐστιν, τὰ μικρὰ καὶ λεπτὰ τῶν ζώων ἀγρευούσης, ὥς φησιν Ἀριστοτέλης). The Stagirite's account is incorporated here in an argument that illustrates the bird's flesh-eating nature. It may originate from Aristotle's *Περὶ ὀρνίθων*, but the mediation of a lost problem cannot be excluded. See Sandbach 1982, p. 211 and Teodorsson 1989–1996, III, p. 234.

one testicle only'), and the new problem context may explain why he does so. The problem is primarily concerned with the fecundity of sows (in terms of their number of litters) rather than with the fertility of boars. It would, indeed, be absurd to assert that all young boars become castrated, since the species of boars would soon be extinct.⁵⁴ The adaptation may be even more ingenious than that, though, especially if we take into consideration the number of litters Plutarch vaguely refers to in the *quaestio*: *πλεονάκις* for the domesticated sow and *ἅπαξ* for the wild sow. It can be hypothesized, then, that Plutarch's adaptation comes to mean that half the number of testicles (*μόνορχις*) diminishes the fertility of wild boars, perhaps, indeed, by a factor of two. In any case, it is not unreasonable to assume that, for Plutarch, a lower fertility of the boar implies a lower fecundity of the sow, since a boar is needed to impregnate the sow. Therefore, wild sows litter only once (the wild boar having only one testicle), whereas domesticated sows retain their fecundity at full extent and litter more than once (i.e. perhaps twice, because the domesticated boar has two testicles).⁵⁵ Clearly, a digression into the boar's total infertility and castration would be of no use in the context of *Quaest. nat.* 21, and this is probably why Plutarch adapted Aristotle's text.⁵⁶ This example, then, shows how

⁵⁴ Sensazono 2006, p. 209, n. 123 claims that Plutarch knew that the term *τομίας* in Aristotle does not necessarily indicate the *full* castration and privation of both testicles, but also of only one. If this is true (which I doubt), it leaves unexplained why Plutarch did not simply copy *τομίας*. Sensazono also says that the root *τεμ-* indicates a cut and thus implies a mutilation, but in Arist., *HA* 6, 21, 575b1 it clearly refers to *full* castration. See also Meeusen 2013a, p. 319–321.

⁵⁵ The belief that domesticated sows have *two* litters is, indeed, supported by *Suppl. probl.* 2, 155 (= *Probl. ined.* 2, 152), Pliny, *NH* 8, 205 and Glycas, *Ann.* 1, 62 (119, 22–120, 2 Bekker). For the idea that impregnation is also possible with only one testicle, see Arist., *GA* 4, 1, 765a23–31. For the belief, to the contrary, that horses with only one testicle are infertile or beget such offspring, see *Hipp. Berol.* 14, 1, 11–13 (= *Corp. Hipp. Graec.* 1, 78, 15–17 Oder – Hoppe): τοὺς μονόρχεις δὲ οὐ δεῖ παραλαμβάνειν, ἀγόνους ὄντας κατὰ τὸ πλεῖστον ἢ ὁμοιον γεννῶντας.

⁵⁶ Plutarch's acquaintance with Aristotle's account in *Historia animalium* can be either direct or indirect (viz. via a lost problem). There are, indeed, several parallels, but none of them mention the concept of *μόνορχις*, so that we are probably dealing with a reformulation by Plutarch himself. Cf. *Suppl. probl.*

Plutarch at some points freely processes traditional authority in his natural problems, reformulating and twisting it where he personally finds this necessary and fitting.

In general, Plutarch's peculiar method of citing (either by means of aetiological analogy, semantic appropriation or reformulation of the quoted content) can be considered an authorial strategy in its own right that manifests the author's voice in his own text. As such, the adaptation of the source material is a clear expression of the Chaeronean's urge for zetetic inventiveness, which ties in closely with the rhetorical dynamics of sympotic extemporization. On the spot inventiveness is, in fact, a much appreciated quality at Plutarch's table that allows for unrestricted deliberation on any topic, as long as the criterion of plausibility is met. In *Quaest. conv.* 3, 5, 651F–653B, for instance, we find Plutarch extemporizing on the topic of the temperature of wine. Ancient φυσικοί most commonly held that wine has a hot δύναμις,⁵⁷ but Florus at this occasion asks why Plutarch believes that wine is cold (651F–652A: τὸν δ' οἶνον ἐπιθυμῶ μαθεῖν ὁπόθεν ὑπόνοιαν ὑμῖν τοῦ ψυχρὸς εἶναι παρέσχεν).⁵⁸ In the argument that follows, it seems that Plutarch is struggling to balance his own, personal contributions with the theories of traditional authorities. He wonders whether Florus really believes that this is his *own* theory (οἶε γὰρ ἔφην ἐγὼ τοῦτον ἡμέτερον εἶναι τὸν λόγον;), and remembers that he had encountered Aristotle's account of the problem a long time ago (= fr. 221 Rose (cf. Gal., *SMT* 11, 661–665 Kühn): μέννημαι μὲν οὖν ἔφην ἐγὼ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλους ἐντυχῶν

2, 145 (= *Probl. ined.* 2, 142), with Kapetanaki & Sharples 2006, p. 225, n. 457. Cf. also Xen., *Mem.* 1, 2, 30. According to Sandbach 1982, p. 225–226 (cf. also Roskam 2011, p. 45) Plutarch may have found this account in Aristotle's *Περὶ Ὁμήρου* (which is quoted three times by Plutarch: viz. in *De aud. poet.* 32F, *De Pyth. or.* 398A, *De soll. an.* 977A, but the reference is uncertain in the last two cases). This work is sometimes called *Ὁμηρικὰ ζητήματα* and was perhaps a sub-section of the *Problems* once. Plutarch composed *Ὁμηρικὰ μελέται* himself (see frs. 122–127 Sandbach), but according to Bouffartigue 2012, p. 108, n. 285 he knew Aristotle's work only indirectly.

⁵⁷ See e.g. Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 3, 1, 871a2: θερμοῦ ὄντος τοῦ οἴνου.

⁵⁸ This was already mentioned in the previous problem in *Quaest. conv.* 3, 4, 651A (ἐτέρους δὲ πάλιν οἱ τὸν οἶνον οὐ θερμὸν ἀλλὰ καὶ ψυχρὸν ἡγοῦνται. Θαυμάσαντος δὲ τοῦ Φλώρου, 'τὸν μὲν περὶ τοῦ οἴνου λόγον' εἶπεν 'ἀφίημι τούτῳ' δειξας ἐμέ· καὶ γὰρ ἐτυγχάνομεν ὀλίγαις ἡμέραις πρότερον εἰς τοῦτο διειλεγμένοι κτλ.).

οὐ νεωστὶ λόγῳ περὶ τούτου τοῦ προβλήματος ἀλλ' ἱκανῶς πάλαι).⁵⁹ Remarkably enough, though, Plutarch does not reproduce the Aristotelian account, and the fact that he says that he encountered it a long time ago may very well suggest that he had forgotten it by the time the discussion took place. From numerous passages throughout *Quaestiones convivales* it appears that there is, in fact, a certain tension between the aspects of recollection and forgetfulness, which seems to be inherent to the dynamics of sympotic conversation (see below). In the present discussion, Plutarch immediately provides an alternative explanation attributed to another philosophical heavyweight, viz. Epicurus, who explained this matter in his *Symposium* in light of atomist theory (fr. 60 Usener). Epicurus' account, in turn, meets with the (Pyrrhonian) scepticism of Florus, who emphatically asks Plutarch how he will *personally* attempt to solve the problem (ἀλλὰ σὺ πῶς ἐπιχειρεῖς εἰς τὸ ψυχρὸν εἶναι τὸν οἶνον;).⁶⁰ Plutarch replies that he will do this in the same way as he did the other day (see n. 58) when he was prompted to extemporize on the subject (οὕτως, ὡς ἔφην ὑπέδυν τότε προσηναγκασμένος αὐτοσχεδιάσαι), and a series of new arguments then follows to illustrate the wine's coldness. Plutarch's third argument contains specific Aristotelian overtones (e.g. by mentioning the generative property of heat).⁶¹ As such, his argumentative ingenuity in providing a personal explanation is again marked by a creative reproduction of traditional theories in a new context. The fact, however, that Plutarch's initial reaction is to reproduce traditional knowledge (i.e. Aristotle's and Epicurus' theories) is significant for his aetiological method and procedure, where traditional authority is considered a useful starting-point (ἀρχή) for the discussion, as we saw earlier on.

⁵⁹ According to Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 339, the reference is 'probably to a lost Aristotelian collection of Προβλήματα'.

⁶⁰ A similar situation where Plutarch's on the spot rhetorical skill is put to the test is described, e.g., in *Quaest. conv.* 7, 2, 700E, where the symposiasts, under the pretext that wine makes a man more eager and bold in his statements, ask after Plutarch's opinion about the 'horncast' seeds (ἀλλ' ἔν γε Δελφοῖς παρὰ δεῖπνον ἐπέθεντό τινες ἡμῖν τῶν ἐταίρων, ὡς οὐ μόνον 'γαστρὸς ἀπὸ πλείης βουλὴν καὶ μῆτιν ἀμείνω' γινομένην ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ζητήσεις πολὺ προθυμότερας καὶ θρασύτερας τὰς ἀποφάνσεις τοῦ οἶνου ποιοῦντος, ἀξιοῦντες εἰπεῖν τι περὶ τοῦ προβλήματος).

⁶¹ Cf. e.g. Arist., *GA* 2, 3, 736b33–737a8. For further commentary, see Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 343–346.

Then again, given the sympotic context one can, in fact, readily admit to being forgetful – Plutarch is not at all shy, therefore, to admit (or at least imply) that he forgot Aristotle's account.⁶² A more concrete passage to illustrate this is found in *Quaest. conv.* 2, 2, 635B, where Plutarch reports that Aristotle gave an explanation for the (presumably lost)⁶³ problem of why each person is most hungry in fall – he does not reproduce Aristotle's account, though, since he cannot remember it (= fr. 231 Rose: φησὶ γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ [sc. Ἀριστοτέλης] βρωτικώτατον ἕκαστον αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ περὶ τὸ φθινόπωρον εἶναι, καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν ἐπέιρηκεν· ἐγὼ δ' οὐ μνημονεύω). Glaucus replies that this is all the better, since it will allow them to look for an explanation themselves after dinner (βέλτιον εἶπεν ὁ Γλαυκίας· αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἐπιχειρήσομεν ζητεῖν, ὅταν παυσώμεθα δειπνοῦντες). We thus see how a person's forgetfulness can actually function as an incentive for the invention of personal arguments and thus comes in handy as an authorial strategy marking the novelty of a specific explanation.

The reverse idea is also attested, however, viz. that a person's good memory sometimes implies a slavish obedience to the tradition. This idea is found, for instance, in *Quaest. conv.* 6, 4, 690C, where a well-read guest reports that he had encountered in Aristotle's writings an account about the fact that water drawn from wells is cooler if it is suspended in the air of the well. The guest also reproduces Aristotle's explanation for this phenomenon (= fr. 216 Rose: ἦν δ' ὁ ξένος φιλόλογος ἐπιεικῶς, καὶ τοῦτ' ἔφη λαβεῖν ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους μετὰ λόγου κείμενον· εἶναι δὲ τοιόνδε τὸν λόγον κτλ.), and he wins plaudits for his valiant memory, but the symposiasts still continue to examine the Stagirite's account

⁶² On the influence of wine on memory, see e.g. *Quaest. conv.* 7, 5, 705B. See also esp. the programmatic opening quote and its subsequent interpretation in the preface to the first book of *Quaestiones convivales*: 'I hate a fellow-drinker with a good memory' (612C: μισῶ μνάμονα συμπόταν, see Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 31–32). On the aspect of memory and its vagaries in *Quaestiones convivales* more generally, see esp. Oikonomopoulou 2011, p. 112–123. As Pelling 2011, p. 216–217 remarks with regard to *De se ipsum laud.* 544A, forgetfulness is 'one of the engaging weaknesses one can readily admit to' (cf. also Russell 1993, p. 431 and Klotz 2007, p. 661). However, the πεπαιδευμένος should be able to flag his sources by name, and if he fails, this is at the risk of becoming a target of ridicule (see *Quaest. conv.* 5, 2, 675CD).

⁶³ See Sandbach 1982, p. 224 and Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 206–207.

by providing counter-arguments (Τὸν μὲν οὖν ξένον ἐπηνέσαμεν ὡς ἀνδρικῶς καταμνημονεύσαντα· περὶ δὲ τοῦ λόγου διηποροῦμεν), while the guest remains silent and puzzled (σιωπῶντος δ' αὐτοῦ καὶ διαποροῦντος). What this passage shows, then, is that traditional knowledge should not be taken for granted, since it can always be questioned afresh, so that it only serves as a means to trigger intellectual discussion.

The discussion continues in the subsequent problem in *Quaest. conv.* 6, 5, 690E–691C, where Plutarch asks the guest if he remembers Aristotle's account about pebbles and lumps of metal, which people are said to throw in the water to cool and temper it (= fr. 213 Rose: 'Ἀλλὰ μὴν περὶ τῶν χαλίκων' ἔφην 'ἢ τῶν ἀκμόνων, οὓς ἐμβάλλοντες εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ ψύχειν αὐτὸ καὶ στομοῦν δοκοῦσιν, εἰρημένον Ἀριστοτέλει μνημονεύεις;'). The guest replies that Aristotle has only mentioned this phenomenon among some problems but that it is up to them to make an attempt to provide an explanation, since it is most difficult (μόνον ἐν προβλήμασιν εἶρηκε τὸ γινόμενον· εἰς δὲ τὴν αἰτίαν ἐπιχειρήσομεν ἡμεῖς· ἔστι γὰρ μάλιστα δυσθεώρητος).⁶⁴ Plutarch confirms this and replies that he would be astonished if the reason would *not* elude them (θαυμάσαιμ' ἂν, εἰ μὴ διαφύγοι ὁ λόγος ἡμᾶς), but he nevertheless makes an attempt to provide a personal explanation. Apart from the fact that Plutarch, thus, again intends to complete what Aristotle left unsolved, this passage also contains a glance at his philosophical awareness that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to formulate an ultimately correct explanation for such natural problems. This methodological aspect of scientific caution (εὐλάβεια) ties in closely with Plutarch's Platonic-Academic epistemology, according to which no certain account of natural phenomena can be given, so that the φυσικός has to manage with plausible arguments (τὸ πιθανόν).⁶⁵

This idea is formulated more explicitly in *Quaest. conv.* 1, 9, 626E–627F, where the symposiasts try to explain why clothes are washed with drinking water rather than with sea-water. Theon, the literary critic (ὁ γραμματικός), says that this problem was solved already long ago by Aristotle, who attributed its cause

⁶⁴ The phrase ἐν προβλήμασιν probably refers to a lost Aristotelian collection of problems. See Sandbach 1982, p. 224 and Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 264.

⁶⁵ This probably motivates the words δοκεῖ and εἰκός in Plutarch's account.

to the earthy substance in sea-water (= fr. 217 Rose: Καὶ ὁ Θέων ἀλλὰ τοῦτό γ' εἶπε διὰ τῶν γεωδῶν Ἀριστοτέλης πάλαι διαλέλυκεν, ὃ προβέβληκας ἡμῖν). Theon asks Plutarch whether he finds Aristotle's explanation plausible, and Plutarch replies that it is, indeed, *plausible but not true* (ἢ οὐ δοκεῖ σοι τοῦτο πιθανῶς λέγειν Ἀριστοτέλης; Πιθανῶς ἔφην ἐγὼ οὐ μὴν ἀληθῶς), whereupon he criticizes it.⁶⁶ A similar phrase, labelling a specific explanation as being 'plausible but not true', returns in Plutarch's evaluation of Aristotle's account in *Quaest. nat.* 2, 912A regarding the problem of why trees and seeds naturally receive more nourishment from rainwater than from irrigational water. According to Aristotle, so Plutarch writes, rainwater is fresh and new, whereas water of ponds is stale and old (= fr. 215 Rose: τὸ δὲ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀληθές, ὅτι πρόσφατόν ἐστι καὶ νέον ὕδωρ τὸ ὑόμενον ἔωλον δὲ καὶ παλαιὸν τὸ

⁶⁶ Plutarch criticizes Theon's Aristotelian explanation by pointing out that the earthy and rough matter in sea-water would actually facilitate, not hinder, the washing of clothes, but that it is the oily constituent in sea-water that makes it less efficient for this purpose (cf. *Quaest. conv.* 6, 9, 696D). In order to illustrate that sea-water has an oily character Plutarch, on his turn, also appeals to Aristotle (ὅτι δ' ἐστὶ λιπαρά, καὶ αὐτὸς εἶρηκεν Ἀριστοτέλης), who holds that salt contains fat and that sea-water has a flammable character. This account can be retraced to Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 23, 15, 933a18–20, and a parallel is also found in *Quaest. nat.* 1, 911E, albeit in a different context (viz. regarding the problem of why sea-water cannot nourish trees). This is again exemplary of the creative reusability of traditional material in different problem contexts. The discussion continues, and Plutarch notes that there is yet another way to explain the problem (οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ κατ' ἄλλον τρόπον). He argues that salt water dries slower than sweet water, and that it therefore cleans less. Theon interrupts and objects that Aristotle in the same book (ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ βυβλίῳ – presumably in the Aristotelian *Problems*; cf. Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 23, 10, 932b25–28), argues, to the contrary, that people who wash themselves in the sea, if they stand in the sun, dry off faster than those who use fresh water (a parallel is again found in *Quaest. nat.* 1, 911D). Plutarch affirms this, but he adds that he thought that Theon (who is a γραμματικός after all) would rather put his trust in Homer, who contradicts Aristotle on this point (ὥμην σε μᾶλλον Ὀμήρῳ τάναντία λέγοντι πιστεύσειν), when he writes that Odysseus after his shipwreck used river water to wash off the briny scum from his skin (*Od.* 4, 137, 218–219, 226). Plutarch notes that the Poet thus very well understands what is happening (ὑπερφυῶς τοῦ ποιητοῦ τὸ γινόμενον συνωρακότος): the sun evaporates the light parts in sea-water, but leaves behind the salt crystals, which can then be washed off with fresh water. This passage shows how Plutarch – as a character in his own text – plays off traditional theories and authorities against each other in his attempt not only to demonstrate his own literacy (παιδεία) and argumentative creativity (εὐρησιλογία), but also to convince his fellow symposiasts with plausible arguments (τὸ πιθανόν).

λιμναῖον;).⁶⁷ Plutarch concludes that the explanation is *plausible rather than true*, pointing out that the (running) waters of springs and rivers are also fresh and new-born, but that they are still less nourishing than rainwater (ἢ καὶ τοῦτο πιθανὸν μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθές ἐστι; τὰ γὰρ πηγαῖα καὶ ποτάμια νάματα πρόσφατα μέν ἐστι καὶ νεογενῆ [...], τρέφει δὲ καὶ ταῦτα τῶν ὀμβρίων χεῖρον). Plutarch's attitude towards Aristotle is basically the same as in *Quaest. conv.* 1, 9 (even if the contexts are, of course, very different). Scarcella may be right in pointing out that the phrase 'plausible but not true' has a playful and ironic connotation, but it is not therefore irrelevant, in my opinion, in light of Plutarch's epistemology more generally.⁶⁸ The basic idea seems to be that the relative plausibility of a natural scientific explanation, rather than its absolute correctness (whatever this may be), is the main criterion to take into consideration. Or as Teodorsson has it: 'These expressions seem at first sight to indicate that Plut. was a thorough researcher, eager to arrive at the truth, but in reality he was prone to be content with τὸ πιθανόν or τὸ εἰκός [...]'.⁶⁹ This can again be linked, then, with Plutarch's Platonic-Academic attitude in postponing final judgment in natural scientific matters (ἐποχή).

Plutarch's critical attitude towards Aristotle is also attested in *Quaest. nat.* 12, 914F regarding the problem of why oil that is sprinkled on sea-water causes clearness and calm (Διὰ τί τῆς θαλάττης ἐλαίῳ καταρραινομένης γίνεται καταφάνεια καὶ γαλήνη;). According to Aristotle, so Plutarch writes in the first *causa*, the wind, slipping off the smoothness (so caused by the oil), makes no impact and raises no surge (Πότερον, ὥς Ἀριστοτέλης φησί, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς λειότητος ἀπολισθαῖνον οὐ ποιεῖ πληγὴν οὐδὲ σάλον;). Several parallels can be found for this account in the tradition of natural problems,⁷⁰ but Plutarch criticizes this view in the second *causa*, where he highlights the incompleteness of Aristotle's

⁶⁷ Cf. also *De def. or.* 424C (and *De prim. frig.* 952B, *Quaest. conv.* 6, 2, 687DE). See also e.g. Galen, *SMT* 11, 471, 13–14 Kühn.

⁶⁸ Scarcella 1998, p. 340, n. 352: 'un gradevole tono ironico'. Pace Senzasono 2006, p. 19–20, with n. 29.

⁶⁹ Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 150 (translated by Senzasono 2006, p. 20 without reference).

⁷⁰ Cf. Ps.-Arist., *Probl.* 23, 38, 935b17–27; 32, 10, 961a18–23; 32, 11, 961a24–30 and *Suppl. probl.* 3, 29 and 47.

theory. He finds Aristotle's theory plausible, but only regarding the external aspect of the phenomenon (ἢ τοῦτο μὲν πιθανῶς εἴρηται πρὸς τὰ ἐκτός). He then draws attention to the internal (i.e. the submarine) aspect of the phenomenon by referring to the popular account that divers take oil into their mouth and blow it out in the depths, so that they get light and transparency in the water. As Plutarch observes, it is of course impossible to adduce slipping of the wind as the cause there (οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκεῖ πνεύματος ὀλισθον αἰτιάσασθαι). By reason of its denseness, so the argument continues, the oil (in its movement out of the divers' mouth) pushes and forces aside the sea, which is earthy and irregular.⁷¹ When the sea flows back to itself, afterwards, and draws together, intermediate passages are left, which provide transparency and clearness to the eyes. This problem shows how Plutarch aims to criticize Aristotle's theory not necessarily by rejecting it (he considers it plausible, after all), but by further elaborating it. Aristotle only explained the aspect of calm (γαλήνη), as mentioned in the *quaestio*, whereas Plutarch's second *causa* deals with the clearness (καταφάνεια) caused by the oil. In the third and final *causa*, Plutarch will eventually attempt to combine both these aspects (καταφάνεια καὶ γαλήνη) in order to formulate a 'complete' solution for the problem at issue – in as far as this is epistemologically possible, of course.⁷²

⁷¹ As Sandbach 1965, p. 178, n. b notes, the density of the oil refers to its lack of interstices (cf. *Quaest. conv.* 6, 9, 696AB, 7, 3, 702 BC), so that the seawater, which is earthy and irregular, does not mingle with it, but is pushed aside by it.

⁷² For further commentary, see Meeusen 2013a, p. 294–298. Another oil-related problem is discussed in *Quaest. conv.* 7, 3, 702AC, viz. why the upper part of oil (in vessels) is best. One of the symposiasts attributes this to the oil's density, which explains its aversion to mixture (cf. n. 71): owing to this aversion, there is no admixture of air with olive oil, so that it is less likely that oil is changed by an element (i.e. air) that has no power over it (ἤττον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τρέπεσθαι μὴ κρατούντος). It appears to the symposiasts that this theory was countered by Aristotle's observation (τετηρηκώς) that oil in partly emptied vessels has a better odour and is better throughout: Aristotle actually attributes the cause for this improvement to the air, since there is more of it and it is more powerful when it enters a partly empty vessel (= fr. 224 Rose: ἐδόκει δὲ πρὸς τοῦτον ὑπεναντιοῦσθαι τὸν λόγον Ἀριστοτέλης, τετηρηκώς, ὥς φησιν, εὐωδέστερόν τε γινόμενον καὶ βέλτιον ὅλως τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἀποκενουμένοις ἀγγείοις ἔλαιον· εἴτα τῷ ἀέρι τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς βελτιώσεως ἀνατίθησιν, πλείων γάρ ἐστι καὶ κρατεῖ μᾶλλον εἰς ἀποδεῖς κατερχόμενος τὸ ἀγγεῖον). This account may again originate from a lost Aristotelian problem (see

3. Conclusion: Plutarchus Aristotelicus?

The analysis of the explicit Aristotelian passages in Plutarch's natural problems shows, in conclusion, that they do not blindly rely on Aristotelian *idées reçues*. Plutarch does often find a useful point of departure in a very specific Aristotelian account, to which he ascribes a certain level of plausibility, but in nearly each case he also feels prompted to add 'something of his own' (*ἰδίον τι*), in order to demonstrate his own rhetorical-argumentative creativity. To this end, Plutarch formulates alternative theories, completes what remained unexplained thus far, or raises new problems that are closely related to older ones, as if to compete with the Stagirite's established authority in the field of natural problems. In doing so, Plutarch sometimes rehashes specific Aristotelian theories in the new problem contexts, making adaptations to their original content or formulation when necessary. For Plutarch, argumentative ingenuity (*εὐρησιλογία*) is, in fact, a much appreciated ability in the search for innovative contributions to established doxography, while traditional knowledge in itself is considered a useful starting-point (*ἀρχή*) for further discussion.⁷³

One might perhaps think after all this that Plutarch tried to inscribe himself in the long tradition of Peripatetic scholarship devoted to natural problems that ran from the time of Aristotle himself up to the second century AD, when it was reinvigorated. One may even wonder whether the Chaeronean aimed to position himself in the (virtual) scientific community of the

Teodorsson 1989–1996, III, p. 50). Aristotle's authority is used to refute a certain argument here, and in what follows, Plutarch again (implicitly) endorses the Stagirite's argument (by arguing that air deprives wine and oil from ageing, which is harmful for the wine but useful for the oil). In addition, the aspect of observation (*τετηρηκώς*) is, of course, seminal to Aristotle's natural scientific method, and Plutarch also acknowledges its relevance in the context of natural scientific discussions here, albeit with the (implicit) awareness that it can only provide inferior knowledge. On Aristotle's scientific method and the place that is reserved in it for observation, see, e.g., Düring 1961 and Owen 1961. Cf., e.g., *PA* 1, 1, 640a14–15: *πρῶτον τὰ φαινόμενα ληπτέον [...] εἶτα τὰς αἰτίας λεκτέον*.

⁷³ On Plutarch's conceptualization of argumentative ingenuity (*εὐρησιλογία*), see Roskam 2009, p. 373, Oikonomopoulou 2011, p. 120–123 and Meeusen 2012a. See also Teodorsson 1989–1996, I, p. 290: 'The discussions at the drinking-parties were pursued as a sport and training in *εὐρησιλογία* [...]'.

Lyceum by solving what he and his peers would consider to be typically Aristotelian problems, but, as noted before, caution is required in this matter, seeing that Plutarch was in the first place an enthusiastic adherent of Platonic-Academic philosophy.⁷⁴ The question then rises why a Middle Platonist like Plutarch was interested in such Peripatetic affairs? Did he have the intention to ally Platonism with Aristotelianism (as other Middle- and Neo-Platonists did), or is the answer more nuanced?

Scholars have shown that Plutarch's scientific program in general, is informed by Platonic-Academic ontology and epistemology, and the same is, in fact, true for his natural problems more specifically.⁷⁵ As we can learn from Plutarch's other scientific writings (such as *De facie* or *De primo frigido*), a very consistent world view lies at the basis of Plutarch's natural philosophical thinking, which is founded on the dichotomy between natural/necessary causes on the one hand, and the intelligible/divine principle on the other.⁷⁶ These features are considered to be complementary to each other, and it is only by taking them *both* into account that one is able, according to Plutarch, to provide a consistent motivation of the world around us, in terms of its natural processes and its providential ordering by the Demiurge. Since one cannot, however, attain genuine 'science' (ἐπιστήμη) on the basis of physical aetiology alone – since natural causes are anchored in empirical data that lack ontological stability – Plutarch's natural scientific writings follow an anti-dogmatic method that looks for plausible explanations (τὸ πιθανόν) and postpones final judgment (ἐποχή). This method is clearly reflected in the aetiologies of Plutarch's natural problems, where the aspect of plausibility comes in as the most pivotal criterion in the construction of authority, and where final judgment is always postponed. Obviously, the authority of the φυσικός is, by its focus on the natural causes,

⁷⁴ Flashar 1962, p. 369 also emphasizes that Plutarch is not a member of the Peripatetic tradition, when he notes that '[a]ußerhalb des Peripatos läßt sich eine sachliche Nähe und productive Weiterbildung der arist. Probl. nur bei Plutarch beobachten'. It remains to be seen, then, which position Plutarch precisely took *vis-à-vis* the Peripatetic tradition of natural problems.

⁷⁵ See e.g. Opsomer 1998, Kechagia 2011 and Meeusen 2014.

⁷⁶ On Plutarch's dualistic view on causality, see esp. Donini 1992. See also Meeusen 2013b and Meeusen 2015.

destined to be intrinsically inferior to that of the φιλόσοφος, who pursues genuine ‘scientific’ insight (ἐπιστήμη) belonging to the realm of the intelligible and the divine. As such, Aristotle’s – or more broadly Aristotelian – science, is by its primary focus on natural causality generally subjected to that of Plato, whose scientific project (as propounded in the *Timaeus*) is tilted in favour of the intelligible and the divine – topics that are also of greater interest to Plutarch’s philosophical concerns.⁷⁷

To set the record straight, then, the Chaeronean’s natural problems are not the work of a *Plutarchus Aristotelicus*. They are not the product of his philosophical aspiration to be counted among the ranks of the Peripatetics. In the end, the use of a natural scientific discourse (as employed by Aristotle and other φυσικοῖ)⁷⁸ does not step up to the mark to express the intelligible truth behind natural phenomena, and it is exactly the search for this divine principle that defines the eventual goal of (natural)

⁷⁷ Cf. Roskam 2011, p. 61 and Oikonomopoulou 2011, p. 105. A relevant passage to illustrate Plutarch’s high esteem of Plato’s authority in natural scientific problems is found, e.g., in *Quaest. conv.* 7, 1, 697F–700B, where Plutarch personally defends Plato’s contested view that drink passes through the lungs (*Tim.* 70c, 91a). Plutarch concludes that the truth is undoubtedly unreachable in such questions, and that it was unnecessary to speak in such a bold way against a philosopher of distinguished reputation and authority (that is Plato) in a matter which is incomprehensible and admits to so much dispute (700B: εἰκότα γὰρ μακρὰ ταῦτα μᾶλλον ἐκείνων. τὸ δ’ ἀληθές ἴσως ἀληπτον ἔν γε τούτοις, καὶ οὐκ ἔδει πρὸς φιλόσοφον δόξῃ τε καὶ δυνάμει πρῶτον οὕτως ἀπαυθαδίσασθαι περὶ πράγματος ἀδήλου καὶ τοσαύτην ἀντιλογίαν ἔχοντος). This passage clearly illustrates Plutarch’s high opinion of Plato, Platonic doctrine and Platonic epistemology (i.e. his ‘sceptical’ attitude towards natural phenomena and observational data). Plutarch comes to a very similar conclusion at the end of his argument in *De prim. frig.* 955C, which is a *locus classicus* in the debate on Plutarch’s epistemology. See Opsomer 1998, p. 213–221, and most recently Donini 2011, p. 31–35, esp. p. 32 (with further literature).

⁷⁸ As regards the use of Peripatetic terminology in Plutarch’s natural problems in *Quaestiones convivales*, see Kechagia 2011, p. 98. She argues that the Peripatetic character of these problems is an evident feature of the explanatory scheme the symposiasts employ, considering the Peripatetic origin of this tradition, but that it is probably devoid of a strict connotation of philosophical sect allegiance for Plutarch himself. After all, the symposiasts Plutarch puts on stage in *Quaestiones convivales* often adhere to different philosophical schools, but they still share the very same interest and knowledge of the, in that case, more ‘generic’ Peripatetic tradition. For further reading on Plutarch’s use of scientific terminology, see Senzasono 1999, Opsomer 1999, Meeusen 2013c and Van der Stockt 2013.

philosophy for Plutarch, who elsewhere emphatically follows Plato in this regard.⁷⁹

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⁷⁹ See esp. *De def. or.* 435F–436A, 436DE, *Nic.* 23, 2–4, *Per.* 6, 2–4 and *Pl.*, *Phd.* 97b–99d. In *Quaest. conv.* 7, 1, 699B, we read that the skilfully contrived organization of nature's activities is inaccessible through words, and that it is impossible to adequately describe the exact working of the instruments it employs – that is breath and heat (ἡ γὰρ φύσις οὐκ ἐφικτὸν ἔχει τῷ λόγῳ τὸ περὶ τὰς ἐνεργείας εὐμήχανον, οὐδ' ἔστι τῶν ὀργάνων αὐτῆς τὴν ἀκριβείαν οἷς χρῆται (λέγω δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ θερμόν) ἀξίως διελθεῖν). This is generally taken to imply that a physical discourse is inadequate to formulate the absolute ‘truth’, which means that it does not enable the φυσικός to seize the divine and intelligible principle that lies behind the face of nature. See e.g. Donini 1986, p. 208–209: ‘sono infatti implicite le operazioni della demiurgia che non sono però completamente esplicabili dal discorso umano’. We may very well be dealing here with an echo of Plato's remark in *Tim.* 28c that it is not as such impossible (ἀδύνατον) to personally discover (εὐρεῖν) God – even if this is a hard task – but to declare (λέγειν) him unto all men. The same idea is formulated by Plutarch, e.g., in *De Is. et Os.* 381B: φωνῆς γὰρ ὁ θεῖος λόγος ἀπροσδεής ἐστι. Compare also the concept of ἀπόρητα in *De cur.* 517D (with further discussion in Meeusen 2013a, p. 143–144). See also Meeusen 2015.

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Abstract

This contribution examines how Aristotle's authority is established and conserved in the tradition of natural problems, more precisely by providing a case study of the natural problems of Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. 45–120 AD). Aristotle's authority holds a privileged rank in Plutarch's natural problems, where it often serves as a starting-point for further debate, but the Chaeronean often feels prompted to add 'something of his own' (ἰδίον τι) to the discussion, thus underlining his own authorial role in his own text. An important question from the perspective of the history of (natural) science and philosophy will then be why a Middle Platonist like Plutarch was interested in such Peripatetic affairs. Did he have the intention to ally Platonism with Aristotelianism in his natural problems, or is the answer more nuanced?

BRAM DEMULDER*

PLATO VS. PLATO
ON THE GENERATION
OF THE COSMOS (*TIM.* 28B)
AUTHORITY
IN THE INTERPRETATIONS
OF PLUTARCH AND PROCLUS

1. *Introduction*

Imagine an innocent reader. Imagine a reader approaching the extant texts of Plato without any knowledge of the subsequent interpretative tradition. This fictional character would probably not suspect that these texts would ever carry the authority they carried at the end of Antiquity. On the contrary, they might rather consider Plato to be a particularly unauthoritative author, especially when enjoying Socrates' irony or when learning about the latter's distrust of the authority of written texts.¹ Moreover, they would not need scholarly literature to figure out that Plato is never addressing the reader directly in his dialogues.² Reading the *Timaeus*, then, they would learn that the account of the creation – again, not told by Plato, not even by Socrates, but by the Pythagorean character Timaeus – is merely an εἰκὼς μῦθος ('likely story', *Timaeus* [*Tim.*] 29D), as is every story about the visible realm.³ Timaeus' statement is clear:

* I would like to thank Geert Roskam and Gerd Van Riel, my main authorities in Platonic matters, for their comments on an earlier version of this paper and Liesbeth Schulpé for correcting my English. Furthermore, I am greatly indebted to the two anonymous reviewers, whose thorough comments made me rethink my position on several points.

¹ On the value of the written word the Platonic *locus classicus* is *Phaedrus* 274B–278B.

² On this problem see e.g. the contributions in Press 2000.

³ The literature on the *Timaeus* being a 'likely story' is vast. See recently Brisson 2012 and Grasso 2012, both responses to Burnyeat's 2005 seminal paper. On this subject in Proclus' interpretation of the *Timaeus* see Martijn 2006.

ἐὰν οὖν, ὦ Σώκρατες, πολλὰ πολλῶν πέρι, θεῶν καὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς γενέσεως, μὴ δυνατοὶ γινώμεθα πάντη πάντως αὐτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς ὁμολογουμένους λόγους καὶ ἀπηκριβωμένους ἀποδοῦναι, μὴ θαυμάσης. (*Tim.* 29C)

Don't be surprised then, Socrates, if it turns out repeatedly that we won't be able to produce accounts on a great many subjects – on gods or the coming to be of the universe – that are completely and perfectly consistent and accurate.⁴

Never would our imagined reader get the impression that Plato intended to provide an authoritative, let alone a definitive account on the generation of the cosmos and the causes of the visible. In his introduction to Zeyl's translation of the *Timaeus*, Cooper feigns (and exaggerates) this innocence when he concludes: '*Timaeus* offers the reader a rhetorical display, not a philosophical dialogue'.⁵

It did not take long before innocence was lost and Platonism started to move in the direction of a dogmatic system, with Plato as an authoritative founder rather than a literary genius writing varied dialogues featuring a conversationalist with a soft spot for *aporia*. The first heirs of Plato, Speusippus and Xenocrates, already bear witness to this tendency, partially, at least, in order to defend their master against Aristotle's criticism.⁶ Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, written about eight centuries later, can be considered the final stage of this evolution: in his *summa theologiae* the *diadochus* displayed Platonism as a majestic construction with unshakable foundations.⁷ Although it is in line with the

⁴ Quotations from Plato's dialogues are taken from Burnet's edition and the translations included in the collected works edited by Cooper (for the *Timaeus* by Zeyl, for the *Statesman* by Rowe).

⁵ Cooper 1997, p. 1224. Of course, this judgment is exaggerated in the opposite direction. A more realistic evaluation is Baltes 1976, p. 7: 'Plato scheint also seinen Timaios in eine wogende Diskussion hineingestellt zu haben, ohne sie autoritativ beenden zu wollen'. An interesting middle ground between Cooper's rhetorical and Baltes' philosophical presentations of the matter is found by Dillon 1997, who points to *deliberate*, philosophically challenging inconsistencies in Plato's thought.

⁶ A recent introduction to the systematizing efforts of the early Platonists is Dillon 2003.

⁷ The *Platonic Theology* was described as a *summa theologiae* by Steel 2010, p. 651.

self-presentation of most later Platonists, there are significant problems with this reconstruction of Platonic history as the development of a dogmatic system. Most notably, the sceptical period in the history of Platonism – the so-called New Academy – cannot be overlooked.⁸

However, the case study to be discussed in this paper is central and apparently exclusive to dogmatic Platonism.⁹ The growing importance of the *Timaeus* as an account on the sensible realm goes hand in hand with the development of dogmatic Platonism after the sceptical period and, henceforth, the dialogue unremittingly played an important part as an authoritative text.¹⁰ Unsurprisingly – even more so when we try and imitate the innocent reader – this not only led to doctrines, but also to dissensions involving those doctrines. One of the most interesting and important dissensions concerning the *Timaeus* arose around *Tim.* 28B.¹¹

ὁ δὲ πᾶς οὐρανὸς – ἡ κόσμος ἢ καὶ ἄλλο ὅτι ποτὲ ὀνομαζόμενος
μάλιστα ἂν δέχοιτο, τοῦθ' ἡμῖν ὠνομάσθω – σκεπτέον δ' οὖν περὶ
αὐτοῦ πρῶτον, ὅπερ ὑπόκειται περὶ παντὸς ἐν ἀρχῇ δεῖν σκοπεῖν,

⁸ One could argue (cf. De George 1976, p. 81) that scepticism effectively excludes epistemic authority and that, consequently, scepticism can be ignored in a discussion of authority. In the case of Platonism, however, that would be too easy a solution, since, for a Platonist, epistemic questions and exegetical questions are inextricably linked. A sceptical reader of Plato may well reject any epistemic authority while invoking exegetical authority to proclaim that the sceptical way of reading Plato is the correct one (cf. Dillon 1996, p. 43: Arcesilaus and his successors 'introduced the sceptical method into the Academy, a development for which they could, and did, claim the *authority* of Socrates' [my emphasis]).

⁹ Nevertheless, there are elements in the thought of a 'dogmatic' Platonist like Plutarch that undeniably preserve traces of the philosophy of the New Academy. On this subject, see Opsomer 2005, p. 163–175 with discussion of earlier scholarship, notably by Donini and Bonazzi.

¹⁰ On the centrality of the *Timaeus* in the development of dogmatic Platonism, see e.g. Dörrie 1976, p. 32–39. On authority in Platonism see, apart from the contribution of Opsomer and Ulacco to this volume, e.g. Sedley 1989 and 1997 and Boys-Stones 2001, p. 99–150. On the rich reception history of the *Timaeus*, see recently e.g. Reydam-Schils 1999 and 2003; Neschke-Hentschke 2000; Sharples & Sheppard 2003; Leinkauf & Steel 2005; Mohr & Sattler 2010.

¹¹ Tarrant 2000, p. 44–46 uses the same dispute as an example *par excellence* for discussing the dynamics of Platonic interpretation.

πότερον ἦν αἰεί, γενέσεως ἀρχὴν ἔχων οὐδεμίαν, ἢ γέγονεν, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς
τινος ἀρξάμενος. γέγονεν. (*Tim.* 28B)

Now as to the whole universe or world order – let's just call it by whatever name is most acceptable in a given context – there is a question we need to consider first. This is the sort of question one should begin with in inquiring into any subject. Has it always existed? Was there no origin from which it came to be? Or did it come to be and take its start from some origin? It has come to be.

At first sight, this passage seems quite straightforward: the position that there was a real creation of the cosmos was not particularly eccentric and this is what Timaeus seems to advocate here. Soon, however, questions arose in Plato's garden. To mention only one of the most intriguing: if the craftsman of the cosmos is supremely good and the cosmos he crafted is the best possible cosmos, as the *Timaeus* tells us, then what is his excuse for being there while the cosmos was not yet there? How is it possible that he needed a change of mind to set about his work?¹² Plato's first successors seem to have replied to these questions by adopting a non-literal interpretation of the *Timaeus*: Plato had described the creation of the cosmos the way he did for didactic purposes, in order to make a highly complicated matter somewhat easier to grasp. As a consequence there were, throughout the Platonic tradition, roughly two ways to interpret the account of the creation in the *Timaeus*: as the description of a real event or as a metaphorical account.¹³

This clear-cut dissension on an authoritative text so central to Platonic thought provides us with an interesting case study on how Platonism was not a practice of simply constructing and preserving authority, but rather of shaping and reshaping authority. In order to illustrate this, I will discuss a few aspects of authority in the interpretation of a representative for each of the two stances. The so-called Middle Platonic philosopher

¹² See Baltes' 1976, p. 10–13 overview of Aristotle's objections to Plato's *Timaeus*. In the context of the present paper, see also e.g. Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 382, 12–20 (see infra n. 26 on references to Proclus' *In Tim.*).

¹³ In an invaluable two-volume study Baltes 1976 and 1978 has collected the evidence of these two currents in the interpretative history of the *Timaeus*.

Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. 45–120 CE) famously subscribed to a literal reading of the text, whereas the Neoplatonist Proclus (412–485 CE) advocated a metaphorical reading.¹⁴ When analysing the dynamics of authority in the interpretations of these two Platonists, it will be important to distinguish between the authority of Plato and the authority of certain interpreters and interpretations of Plato's thought. We can call these two forms of authority 'primary' and 'secondary' authority respectively.¹⁵

2. Primary authority: Plato's consistency

Let us first consider the authority of Plato himself, whom both Plutarch and Proclus considered to be θεῖος ('divine').¹⁶ The observation that neither ever openly rejected even a single word of Plato's, then, is admittedly redundant. It comes, however, with a less redundant consequence. Our innocent reader would soon get the impression that Plato often let his characters voice different opinions on the same subject in different dialogues. An infamous example, and a particularly relevant one for our case, is the fact that Plato considers the soul to be ungenerated in the *Phaedrus* (245C–246A) but generated in the *Timaeus* (34B–35A). Reconciling these opinions would undoubtedly be a challenge to our reader, although they would probably not mind if one or two elements escaped the reconciliation. The situation is different for a dogmatic Platonist. If he wants to affirm Plato's authority, it logically follows that he has to assume Plato's *absolute* consistency. Simply put: if (1) all *p*'s of *X* are true and (2) if *p* and its negation cannot both be true (the principle of non-contradiction), then *X* has to be entirely consistent. Such a rigid viewpoint underlies both Middle Platonic and Neopla-

¹⁴ For an introduction to Plutarch's interpretation see Opsomer 2004. On Proclus' interpretation see, apart from Baltes 1978, e.g. Lernould 2001 and Phillips 1997.

¹⁵ For another way of approaching these two competing interpretations of *Tim.* 28B, see Cleary 2013, who adopts a gadamerian method.

¹⁶ For Plutarch, see e.g. *Pericles* 8, 2 or *Quaestiones Convivales* 684F (cf. the discussion on Plato's divine descent at *Quaestiones Convivales* 717D–E). For Proclus, see e.g. *In Tim.* III, 9, 22 and III, 34, 3. See also the *encomium* of Plato at the beginning of the *Platonic Theology* (I, 1), which will be discussed *infra*.

tonic exegesis. Plato was πολύφωνος, not πολύδοξος: although he had many voices, he did not express conflicting opinions.¹⁷ A developmental perspective on Plato's dialogues – a modern view met with growing dissatisfaction for the last two decades – is not to be found in ancient Platonism.¹⁸

In his treatise *On the generation of the soul in the Timaeus* (*De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, [*De an. procr.*]) Plutarch shows that pointing out consistency can have a double authoritative function: the interpreter both reaffirms Plato's authority and corroborates his own interpretation, thus transferring Plato's authority to his own text and creating an argument to reject other interpretations. In this vein, after setting out the basics of his interpretation, Plutarch concludes:

ἡ μὲν οὖν διάνοια τοιαύτη κατὰ γε τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν τοῦ Πλάτωνος. ἀπόδειξις δὲ πρώτη μὲν ἡ τῆς λεγομένης καὶ δοκούσης αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἀσυμφωνίας καὶ διαφορᾶς λύσις. οὐδὲ γὰρ σοφιστῇ κραιπαλῶντι, πόθεν γε δὴ Πλάτωνι, τοιαύτην ἂν τις ἀναθείη περὶ οὓς ἐσπουδάκει μάλιστα τῶν λόγων ταραχὴν καὶ ἀνωμαλίαν, ὥστε τὴν αὐτὴν φύσιν ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀγέννητον ἀποφαίνειν καὶ γενομένην, ἀγέννητον μὲν ἐν Φαίδρῳ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐν δὲ Τιμαίῳ γενομένην. (*De an. procr.* 1015F-1016A)

Such, then, in my opinion is Plato's meaning. A first proof of it is that it resolves what is called and seems to be his inconsistency and self-contradiction. For one would not attribute even to a drunken sophist and it is nonsense then to attribute to Plato in regard to the doctrines about which he had been most seriously concerned such confusion and capriciousness as to declare of the same entity [i.e. the soul] both that it is unsubject to generation and that it did come to be, in the *Phaedrus* that the soul is unsubject to generation and in the *Timaeus* that it came to be.¹⁹

¹⁷ Arius Didymus *apud* Stobaeus, *Anthologium* II, 7, 4a, 30–31: Πλάτων πολύφωνος ὢν, οὐχ ὥς τινες οἴονται πολύδοξος κτλ. See Annas 1999, 9–30 for a discussion of how this dictum fits the anti-developmental interpretative policy of the Platonists (i.c. in the field of ethics).

¹⁸ For recent challenges to the developmental view, see e.g. Rowe 2006 and most contributions in Annas & Rowe 2002 and Boys-Stones e.a. 2013.

¹⁹ Quotations from Plutarch's work are borrowed from the Loeb Classical Library editions, in the case of *De animae procreatione* the edition and translation is by Cherniss.

To the modern reader, this may seem an odd fallacy: Plutarch is using Plato's consistency both as an *explanandum* and as part of his explanation. To a Platonist's mind, however, this was not a problem. Indeed, it is necessary to actively bring Plato's apparently inconsistent texts into accord with one another (συνοικειῶν, *De an. procr.* 1014A). At the same time, however, there is no need to make emendations (ἐπανόρθωσις, *De an. procr.* 1016C), since all the necessary information is given in the text by Plato himself, at least for the interpreter who is willing to accept it, that is for the Platonist, *in casu* Plutarch himself (*De an. procr.* 1016C: αὐτὸς δίδωσι τοῖς δέχεσθαι βουλομένοις).

Perhaps we can accept this eccentric hermeneutics of consistency as part and parcel of Platonism. Nevertheless, some examples will show that its application entails difficulties. In his treatise, Plutarch develops the theory of a pre-cosmic soul. This soul, which is the main feature of Plutarch's literal reading of *Tim.* 28B, accounts for the existence of evil in the cosmos. Plutarch equates this pre-cosmic soul with what Plato describes in the *Statesman* as the σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία ('innate desire', *Statesman* 272E = *De an. procr.* 1015A) of the cosmos, further specified as τὸ τῆς πάλαι ποτὲ φύσεως σύντροφον πολλῆς μετέχον ἀταξίας πρὶν εἰς τὸν νῦν κόσμον ἀφικέσθαι ('[the cosmos'] ancient nature's inbred character which was marked by a great disorder before reaching the state of the present world-order', *De an. procr.* 1015A, cf. *Statesman* 273B²⁰).

Although, in the second quotation, Plutarch slightly alters Plato's syntax, he can be said to remain faithful to the original as far as the wording is concerned. However, Cherniss has pointed out that the quotation, albeit correct *in se*, is blatantly incomplete: in the *Statesman* myth Plato seems to state that the 'innate desire' is due to the bodily element of the cosmos (τὸ σωματοειδὲς τῆς συγκράσεως, *Statesman* 273B), whereas Plutarch ascribes it to the soul. Cherniss' harsh judgement is that 'Plutarch suppresses' this fact, 'which would have embarrassed his interpretation'.²¹ In response to Cherniss' rather uncharitable

²⁰ Plato's text reads, with a few insignificant differences: τὸ τῆς πάλαι ποτὲ φύσεως σύντροφον ὅτι πολλῆς ἦν μετέχον ἀταξίας πρὶν εἰς τὸν νῦν κόσμον ἀφικέσθαι.

²¹ In the introduction to his edition and translation, p. 139.

evaluation of Plutarch's exegesis, Opsomer has convincingly come to the defence of the Chaeronean by pointing out that τὸ σωματοειδές in this passage of the *Statesman* is not the bodily as such, but rather that which is *like* body. If this possibility is granted, τὸ σωματοειδές can easily be connected with the divisible kind of being which is, indeed, characteristic of the precosmic soul.²² However – and this is a point Opsomer emphasizes himself – the inclusion of τὸ σωματοειδές in the quotation from the *Statesman* would have required another lengthy and complex explanation in an already lengthy and complex treatise. After all, τὸ σωματοειδές *could* mean the bodily as such – and this is how Plutarch unambiguously uses it elsewhere in the same treatise (*De an. procr.* 1024B). Introducing a distinction between two meanings of τὸ σωματοειδές would certainly not have embarrassed Plutarch's interpretation, but it would probably have jeopardized its perceived consistency, and as a consequence – the specific hermeneutical stance could well backfire – the perceived consistency of Plato himself.

Our second example illustrates this point by discussing an aspect of the *Statesman* myth that seems to create a bigger problem for an interpretation like Plutarch's. Here we touch upon the challenge of proving Plato's consistency as it is taken up by Proclus, since he was the one pointing to this particular problem. One of Proclus' works, now commonly known under the title *On the eternity of the world* (*De aeternitate mundi* [*De aet.*]), is transmitted to us through extensive quotations in John Philoponus' response to it. In this work, Proclus presents eighteen arguments in favour of the cosmos' eternity, thus disagreeing with the allies of Plutarch and Atticus, who postulated a literal creation of the cosmos and consequently rejected the eternity of the world. In the eighteenth argument Proclus warns that

οὐκ ἔδει τοὺς περὶ Ἀττικὸν εἰς τὰ ἐν Τιμαίῳ μόνα βλέπειν τὸν ἀπόντα ποτὲ παρόντα ποιοῦντα, οὐ ἀπὴν, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐν Πολιτικῷ τὸν παρόντα ποτὲ ἀπόντα ποιοῦντα ἐκείνου, ὃ παρῆν, καὶ ὡς δι' ἐκεῖνα τὴν τάξιν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀταξίας ποιοῦσιν, οὕτω

²² Opsomer 2004, p. 149–150.

διὰ ταῦτα καὶ μετὰ τὴν τάξιν ἀταξίαν ποιεῖν. (*De aet.* XVIII, p. 606, 16–22 Rabe)

[T]hose in Atticus' school should not look only at the material in the *Timaeus* which makes Him Who is [originally] absent present at some time to that from which He was absent; rather, they should also look at the material in the *Statesman* which makes Him Who is present absent at some time from that to which He was present; and just as on the basis of the former passage they postulate order *after* disorder, so too should they on the basis of the latter postulate disorder after order.²³

We can safely assume that, with τοὺς περὶ Ἀττικόν, Proclus intended to include Plutarch: in the *Commentary on the Timaeus* (*In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* [*In Tim.*]) their views on this issue are usually conflated.²⁴ Particularly interesting about this passage is that Proclus does not criticize his opponents in terms of content, which he often does elsewhere,²⁵ but in terms of interpretative success. As opposed to Proclus himself – so the criticism suggests – Atticus and like-minded philosophers like Plutarch did not succeed to defend Plato's consistency after all. In other words: they failed to pay respect to Plato's authority and therefore – applying the aforementioned Platonic hermeneutics – failed to transfer his authority to their own text.

Proclus certainly makes a strong case. Indeed, the *Statesman* myth, from which Plutarch claimed significant support for the existence of a pre-cosmic soul (viz. the 'innate desire' mentioned earlier), does present us with what amounts to a cyclical world view:

τὸ γὰρ πᾶν τόδε τοτὲ μὲν αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς συμποδηγεῖ πορευόμενον καὶ συγκυκλεῖ, τοτὲ δὲ ἀνήκεν, ὅταν αἱ περίοδοι τοῦ προσήκοντος

²³ A translation of Proclus' *De aeternitate mundi* can be found in Lang & Macro 2001, which also reproduces Rabe's edition of Proclus' text as it is preserved in Philoponus' response. In this case, however, I borrow from Wilberdings translation of Philoponus' *De aeternitate contra Proclum*, since this is a more accurate translation.

²⁴ See Opsomer 2001, p. 188 and passim; Tarrant 2004, p. 182. Cf. Lang & Macro 2001, p. 22–27 and passim, suggesting that, although only Atticus is named as an opponent in *De aet.*, Plutarch is to be included.

²⁵ See esp. Opsomer 2001.

αὐτῷ μέτρον εἰλήφωσιν ἤδη χρόνου, τὸ δὲ πάλιν αὐτόματον εἰς τὰναντία περιάγεται κτλ. (*Statesman* 269C)

This universe the god himself sometimes accompanies, guiding it on its way and helping it move in a circle, while at other times he lets it go, when its circuits have completed the measure of the time allotted to it; then it revolves back in the opposite direction [...].

Logically, Plutarch had two options to account for this aspect of the *Statesman* myth.

(1) He could have interpreted the myth literally, as he does with the *Timaeus* myth. This, however, would almost inevitably lead to a Stoic – or at least Stoicizing – cosmology involving cycles of cosmic ἐκπύρωσις (conflagration) and διακόσμησις (resurrection). The Middle Platonist Severus, who lived a few generations after Plutarch, adopted such an interpretation. In his *Commentary on the Timaeus* Proclus summarizes his views before evidently rejecting them:

μετὰ δὲ ταύτην τὴν δόξαν ἐπισκεψώμεθα Σευήρον, ὃς φησιν ἀπλῶς μὲν αἰδίων εἶναι τὸν κόσμον, τοῦτον δὲ τὸν νῦν ὄντα καὶ οὕτως κινούμενον γενητόν· ἀνακυκλήσεις γὰρ εἶναι διττάς, ὥς ἔδειξεν ὁ Ἐλεάτης ξένος, τὴν μὲν ἣν νυνὶ περιπορεύεται τὸ πᾶν, τὴν δὲ ἐναντίαν. (*In Tim.* I, 289, 6–11)

After this opinion let us examine Severus, who says that in absolute terms the cosmos is everlasting, but that the present one which moves in the way it does is generated. For, [he claims,] there are two cycles, as the Eleatic stranger showed, the one with which the universe now proceeds and its opposite.²⁶

All this comes very close to Stoic theory indeed.²⁷ We know from other works that Plutarch dismissed and even ridiculed

²⁶ Quotations from Proclus *Commentary on the Timaeus* are taken from Diehl's edition and the translation by Runia & Share. It should be clarified that the second book of Proclus' commentary in five books is included in the first volume of Diehl's edition in three volumes (i.e. I, 205–458). References given in this contribution point to the volume, pages and, when applicable, line numbers of Diehl's edition.

²⁷ Dillon 1996, p. 263.

such a cosmology.²⁸ Moreover, one of the purposes of *On the generation of the soul* was to refute vehemently another aspect of Stoic cosmology: its inability to account for the existence of evil (*De an. procr.* 1015B). As a result, a strictly literal interpretation of the cycles in the *Statesman* myth, which would seem a rapprochement to Stoic cosmology and would render other aspects of his interpretation problematic, appears to be out of the question for Plutarch.²⁹

(2) Plutarch's second option was to interpret the cycles metaphorically. And, according to Dillon, this is what he intended with his retelling of the myth here (*De an. procr.* 1026E-F).³⁰ The main function of introducing this cyclical aspect of the myth is to illustrate that there is *at any time* (rather than subsequently) good and evil, order and disorder, both in the human soul and in the cosmos (*De an. procr.* 1026C-E).

Proclus, then, was certainly aware of the possibility to read the *Statesman* myth metaphorically – it is the reading he adopted himself³¹ – but, as has been mentioned, that was not the point of his criticism. Rather he argues, on behalf of Plato's consistency and authority, that, if some interpreters choose to take the *Timaeus* myth literally, they should interpret the *States-*

²⁸ See e.g. *De Stoicorum repugnantiis* 1051E–1052D; *De facie in orbe lunae* 926D; *De defectu oraculorum* 415F–416A. Cf. also Dillon 2002, p. 223–224.

²⁹ An example of such an internal interpretative difficulty could be the involvement of god in the occurrence of evil. One of Plutarch's main concerns in *On the generation of the soul* is to exculpate god (*De an. procr.* 1013 E-F). However, in the *Statesman* myth, Plato states that it was god who let go of the cosmos (*Statesman* 269C; 272E). Plutarch, on the other hand, blames this on the prudential part of the universe, which *καταδαρθάνει λήθης ἐμπιπλάμενον τοῦ οἰκείου* ('falls asleep, filled with forgetfulness of what is proper to it', *De an. procr.* 1026E-F). There are some problems with this. First of all, Plato makes it clear that the forgetfulness affects the whole of the universe and not specifically the prudential part (*Statesman* 273C-D). More importantly, according to Plutarch's interpretation, the prudential part (i.e. the indivisible being) is of an intelligible nature. How could this prudential part, being unchanging by account of its nature (e.g. *De an. procr.* 1016C) be weakening due to its own fault (*καταδαρθάνει*, an active verb)? This does not mean that Plutarch *could not* have read the *Statesman* myth literally: he could certainly have found a way to attribute the active part of the disruption only to the part intimate with body. My point is that he does not push such a reading here.

³⁰ Dillon 1996, p. 205. Cf. also Dillon 1995 p. 374 n. 24. Pace Chlup 2000, p. 145–147.

³¹ Dillon 1995.

man myth accordingly. His own strategy, which combined a metaphorical reading of the *Timaeus* myth with a metaphorical reading of the *Statesman* myth, is thus suggested as the only sound approach if one were to evade the rather un-Platonic consequences of a literal reading of the *Statesman*.

The underlying sentiment of this criticism can be found in a passage from Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*. After quoting the passage in which Plato describes how the demiurge takes over the visible and brings it to order (*Tim.* 30A), Proclus' criticism is as follows:

οἱ μὲν οὖν περὶ Πλούταρχον τὸν Χαιρωνέα καὶ Ἀττικὸν λιπαρῶς ἀντέχονται τούτων τῶν ῥημάτων ὡς τὴν ἀπὸ χρόνου τῷ κόσμῳ γένεσιν αὐτοῖς μαρτυρούντων καὶ δὴ καὶ φασὶ προεῖναι μὲν τὴν ἀκόσμητον ὕλην πρὸ τῆς γενέσεως, προεῖναι δὲ καὶ τὴν κακεργέτιν ψυχὴν τὴν τοῦτο κινούσαν τὸ πλημμελές. (*In Tim.* I, 381, 26–382, 3)

Those around Plutarch of Chaeronea and Atticus cling tenaciously to these words in the belief that they witness on their behalf to the generation of the cosmos from a [point of] time. And what is more, they say that unordered matter pre-existed prior to this generation, and, further, that there pre-existed maleficent soul moving this discordant [mass].

Again, the criticism of the wrong, literal interpretation of the *Timaeus* does not primarily address matters of content, but matters of interpretative policy. Proclus is not implying that a Platonist should not consider every one of Plato's words highly important, for, as we have just seen, he is himself a champion of Plato's absolute consistency. His problem with the interpretations of Plutarch and Atticus is that they read Plato *λιπαρῶς*, 'tenaciously' or rather, since it lacks the necessary interpretative effort, 'comfortably', 'lazily'. Although this particular kind of tenacity is a good quality for pupils (*In Tim.* I, 222, 14; 354, 24), it is a vice for advanced interpreters. Accepting Plato's authority – and thus assuming, defending and exploiting his consistency – can only be done by interpreting Plato.

We have seen how shaping authority is a central issue in the Platonists' engagement with primary (i.e. Plato's) authority. This cannot come as a surprise. On the contrary, it is the only possible way of proceeding from the starting point which all

dogmatic Platonists shared (i.e. accepting Plato's authority) to the result we encounter throughout the Platonic tradition (i.e. the severe disagreement between two interpretations involving *Tim.* 28B). Ironically, the allegiance to Plato's consistency developed into a dispute between Plato and Plato.

3. *Secondary authority: the Platonic tradition*

A discussion of authority in the works of Plutarch and Proclus cannot smooth over a second aspect. By the time of Plutarch, and *a fortiori* by the time of Proclus, interpreting the *Timaeus* had become more than just interpreting Plato's text. An interpreter always found himself standing in an interpretative tradition, and consciously so: both Plutarch and Proclus presented themselves as members of the Academy, which they both understood as a unitary continuation of Plato's school. The contemplation and, consequently, acceptance or rejection of the work of his predecessors was inherent to their own interpretative efforts. We should, therefore, consider the possibility that certain parts of the earlier interpretative tradition became authoritative in themselves, i.e. that earlier Platonists became secondary authorities.

3.1. Plutarch: the open Academy

The Academy of which Plutarch claimed to be a member was not an institution or a school *stricto sensu*, or at least not *one single* institution or school. Nevertheless, Plutarch could state that he was a member of the Academy.³² Moreover, he seems to have devoted a whole treatise, unfortunately lost, to his views on the subject: *Περὶ τοῦ μίαν εἶναι ἀπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος Ἀκαδημείαν* (*On the Unity of the Academy since Plato*, Lamprias catalogue n. 63). This, among other considerations, indicates that his conception of the Platonic tradition included in one way or

³² ἐν Ἀκαδημείᾳ γενόμενος, *De E apud Delphos* 387F. On this statement and its problematic interpretation, see Dillon 1988 and Opsomer 1998, p. 23–25 (with discussion of earlier scholarship). The long-accepted belief that the Platonic 'school' was an actual institution in Plutarch's time was first refuted by Lynch 1972 and Glucker 1978.

another the sceptical period of Platonism.³³ We can expect this broad, open-minded conception of the unity of the Platonic tradition to be connected with the role of secondary authority in Plutarch's thought.

As one of the main reasons for devoting a treatise to his interpretation of the *Timaeus*, Plutarch indicates, in the very first sentence of the treatise, τὸ τοῖς πλείστοις τῶν ἀπὸ Πλάτωνος ὑπεναντιοῦσθαι ('its opposition to most of the Platonists', *De an. procr.* 1012B). Apparently, he did not feel compelled to even pay lip service to his predecessors. On the contrary, he is quite aware of the original character of his work.³⁴ His literal interpretation of the creation of soul and cosmos according to the *Timaeus* is presented in this vein. After concisely introducing the interpretations of Xenocrates and Crantor on the composition of the world soul (as described by Plato in *Tim.* 35A-B) – the two largely compatible interpretations that were in vogue with contemporary Platonists³⁵ – Plutarch sketches the Platonic mainstream against which his interpretation reacts:

ὁμάλως δὲ πάντες οὗτοι χρόνῳ μὲν οἴονται τὴν ψυχὴν μὴ γεγενῆσθαι μηδ' εἶναι γενητὴν, πλείονας δὲ δυνάμεις ἔχειν, εἰς ἃς ἀναλύοντα θεωρίας ἔνεκα τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτῆς λόγῳ τὸν Πλάτωνα γιγνομένην ὑποτίθεσθαι καὶ συγκεραννυμένην. τὰ δ' αὐτὰ καὶ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου διανοούμενον ἐπίστασθαι μὲν αἰδίδιον ὄντα καὶ ἀγέννητον τὸ δὲ ᾧ τρόπῳ συντέτακται καὶ διοικεῖται καταμαθεῖν οὐ ῥᾶδιον ὁρῶντα τοῖς μήτε γένεσιν αὐτοῦ μήτε τῶν γενητικῶν σύνοδον ἐξ ἀρχῆς προϋποθεμένοις ταύτην τὴν ὁδὸν τραπέσθαι. (*De an. procr.* 1013A-B)

³³ Cf. *supra* n. 9, as well as Nikolaidis 1999 and Babut 2007.

³⁴ Cf. also *De an. procr.* 1014A, where he emphasizes once again τὸ ἄηθες τοῦ λόγου καὶ παράδοξον ('what is unusual and paradoxical about my account').

³⁵ *De an. procr.* 1012D: ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν δοκιματάων ἀνδρῶν τοὺς μὲν Ξενοκράτης προσηγάγετο [...] οἱ δὲ Κράντορι τῷ Σολεῖ προσέθεντο [...] οἰμαί τι τὴν τούτων ἀνακαλυφθέντων σαφῆναι ὥσπερ ἐνδόσιμον ἡμῖν παρέξειν ('Since, however, of the men most highly esteemed some were won over by Xenocrates [...] and others adhered to Crantor of Soli [...] I think that the clarification of these two when exposed will afford us something like a key-note'). On the compatibility of the two theories, see Dillon (2003) p. 221–223: 'Crantor may well have expressed himself differently, but it is hard to see that he is at serious odds with Xenocrates, despite the antithesis that Plutarch wishes to set up. In any case, as regards the main issue [i.e. the question if the cosmos had a literal beginning], both are in the same boat as far as Plutarch is concerned' (p. 223).

All these interpreters are alike in thinking that the soul did not come to be in time and is not subject to generation but that it has a multiplicity of faculties and that Plato in analysing its essence into these for the sake of examination represents it verbally as coming to be and being blended together; and they think that with the same thing in mind concerning to universe too, while he knows it to be everlasting and ungenerated, yet seeing the way of its organization and management not to be easy for those to discern who have not presupposed its generation and a conjunction of the generative factors at the beginning, this course is the one that he took.

Plutarch indicates that his own interpretation, which assumes a literal beginning of the cosmos, is fully discussed in another treatise, presumably entitled *Περὶ τοῦ γεγονέναι κατὰ Πλάτωνα τὸν κόσμον* (*On the Fact that in Plato's View the Universe had a Beginning*, Lamprias catalogue n. 66) (*De an. procr.* 1013E). *On the generation of the soul* can be taken to reiterate the arguments set forth in this earlier treatise while elaborating on them in order to focus on the composition of the world soul.

Without a doubt, the issue of the literal creation of the cosmos was central to Plutarch's Platonism.³⁶ Consequently, his opposition to his predecessors cannot be branded as a matter of detail. Moreover, their faulty metaphorical interpretation even amounts to atheism, which Plato – according to Plutarch – refuted by pointing out that the cosmic soul was temporally prior to the cosmic body. By treating this aspect of Plato's doctrine metaphorically, Plutarch's opponents impiously place cosmic body and soul on the same level (*De an. procr.* 1013E–F).³⁷ Apparently, Plutarch's conception of the Platonic tradition allows even for the inclusion of impious souls who diametrically oppose him in matters pertaining to the core of his thought.

³⁶ See also *Quaestiones Platonicae* IV, 1003A and the statement at the beginning of *De an. procr.* that the treatise will tackle issues Plutarch had frequently discussed earlier (1012B).

³⁷ Interestingly, Proclus will, in his turn, follow in the footsteps of Porphyry and Iamblichus by accusing Plutarch (and Atticus) of impiety, since they put the disordered before the ordered and deny the goodness and power of the demiurge (*In Tim.* I, 381, 26–383, 22).

Indeed, Plutarch's treatment of earlier interpretations of the generation of the cosmos in Plato's *Timaeus* is very much in line with his broad conception of the unity of the Platonic tradition. As it turns out, this tradition does not carry significant (secondary) authority: Plutarch could freely and severely criticize his predecessors without running the risk of excluding them (or isolating himself) from the Platonic tradition. The primacy of primary authority (i.e. Plato's authority) over secondary authority (i.e. the authority of the Platonic tradition) in Plutarch's conception of the tradition is absolute, as is clear from his harsh criticism of his predecessors:

ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκοῦσι τῆς Πλάτωνος ἀμφοτέροι διαμαρτάνειν δόξης, εἰ κανόνι τῷ πιθανῷ χρηστέον, οὐκ ἴδια δόγματα περαίνοντας ἀλλ' ἐκείνῳ τι βουλομένους λέγειν ὁμολογούμενον. (*De an. procr.* 1013B)

[T]o me they both [i.e. Xenocrates and Crantor] seem to be utterly mistaken about Plato's opinion if as a standard plausibility is to be used, not in promotion of one's own doctrines but with the desire to say something that agrees with Plato.

Those who follow Xenocrates and Crantor – and Plutarch indicates that most contemporary interpreters did – neglect Plato's own δόξα in favour of the δόγματα of the interpreters themselves. Plutarch, in other words, distrusts secondary authority because it could compromise Plato's rightful primary authority. The price to pay for the valuable absence of secondary authority, was the open-minded conception of the Platonic tradition.

However, it should be added that the workings of secondary authority shine through in two more subtle ways. Moreover, these two ways suggest once again that Platonism was more about reshaping authority than about straightforwardly preserving it. Firstly, this is suggested by the very fact that Plutarch apparently felt compelled to justify his interpretation in the light of his predecessors'. The first sentence of the treatise does not only indicate, as has been mentioned, that it was the originality of his interpretation which prompted Plutarch to write the work. Plutarch at the same time admits that, precisely due to this opposition, the interpretation is δεόμενον παραμυθίας ('in need of vindication', *De an. procr.* 1012B). In Plutarch's

Platonism, secondary authority may not be part of the answer, but it was certainly part of the question: a new interpretation could *oppose* but not, as far as it was intended to be a Platonic interpretation, *neglect* the earlier tradition. Secondly, it is far from likely that Plutarch's presentation of his predecessors' arguments springs from a direct acquaintance with their works. Several elements suggest that what is said about Xenocrates and Crantor is taken from Eudorus, a first-century Platonist.³⁸ Again, secondary authority may not be part of Plutarch's answer, but it most likely was a part of his engagement with earlier answers. It is evident that, through these processes, Plutarch shapes the image of the tradition he presents. On the one hand, by taking the earlier tradition into account, he necessarily makes a selection. On the other hand, by relying on intermediaries for his information, he takes up the selections and focusses of these sources. Unfortunately, it is next to impossible to describe these processes of shaping secondary authority adequately due to our oftentimes limited knowledge of the direct and intermediary sources involved.

A particularly problematic case in point is Plutarch's conception of the relation between Aristotle and the Platonic tradition. After all, we cannot but wonder at the absence of Aristotle's account of the generation of the cosmos in Plutarch's treatise. In other works – and, most importantly, in the treatise *On moral virtue*, which can be viewed in some ways as a counterpart to *On the generation of the soul* – Plutarch often considers Aristotle's doctrines to be compatible with his Platonism to the extent that Karamanolis could conclude that he considered Aristotle 'as somehow belonging to the Platonist tradition'.³⁹ In *De caelo*,

³⁸ See Cherniss' notes to *De an. procr.* 1012D (p. 163 n. e) and 1012E (p. 165 n. c), as well as Ferrari & Baldi 2002, p. 231 n. 30. On Eudorus see most recently Bonazzi 2013.

³⁹ Karamanolis 2006, p. 89: 'Plutarch considers Aristotle as somehow belonging to the Platonist tradition. The fact, though, that he asserts Aristotle's differences from Plato's philosophy as part of his defence of the latter clearly shows that he was not prepared to accept Aristotle's views when these conflict with what he considered to be Plato's doctrine'. This general sketch shows similarities with Plutarch's treatment of e.g. Xenocrates and Crantor, whom he undoubtedly counted among the Platonists. On the parallels between *On moral virtue* and *On the generation of the soul*, see Opsomer 1994.

however, Aristotle famously presents a literal interpretation of the cosmic generation in the *Timaeus* only to dismiss Plato's dialogue as erroneous.⁴⁰ In other words: Aristotle and Plutarch are basically at one as to how the *Timaeus* should be read, although they fundamentally disagree on the value of the doctrine set out in the dialogue. Is it then possible that Plutarch left him out on purpose, thus consciously shaping the image of the Platonic interpretative history of *Tim.* 28B and at the same time strongly enforcing primary authority by excluding criticism of Plato? Perhaps it is even necessary, given the fundamental doctrinal divergences, to attenuate or even reject the view that Plutarch related Aristotle in one way or another to the Platonic tradition in order to explain the fact that Plutarch did not feel obliged to vindicate his views in the light of Aristotle's.⁴¹ But if doctrinal divergence was his reason for excluding Aristotle, why were Platonists like Xenocrates and Crantor, who were impiously mistaken where the interpretation of the *Timaeus* was concerned, not excluded? Was Aristotle's partial rejection of Plato's primary authority decisive? Or should we suppose that the shaped presentation of the tradition was a more unconscious matter in this case? Aristotle may have been omitted (or relegated to the lost work on the subject) in order not to further complicate the main argument or his absence may be due to Plutarch's reliance on Eudorus, who was vehemently opposed to viewing Aristotle as a Platonist.⁴²

⁴⁰ Plutarch was probably aware of the divergences between Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *De caelo*: in a puzzling passage in *Adversus Colotem* (1114F–1115B) he lists Aristotle's treatise among the books ἐν οἷς πρὸς τὰ κυριώτατα καὶ μέγιστα τῶν φυσικῶν ὑπεναντιούμενοι τῷ Πλάτῳ καὶ μαχόμενοι διατελοῦσι ('in which they [i.e. the authors] constantly differ with Plato, contradicting him about the most fundamental and far-reaching questions of natural philosophy'). It should be mentioned, however, that the extent of Plutarch's familiarity with Aristotle's works is largely uncertain. Cf. Sandbach 1982, p. 230: 'Plutarch or his sources knew of *Topica*, *Metaphysics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Historia Animalium*, *Rhetoric* III, and probably of *De Caelo* and *De Anima*. Direct acquaintance with the contents is certain only for *Historia Animalium* and *Rhetoric* III, both books for the use of which before his time there is some evidence'.

⁴¹ Cf. Roskam 2009 and 2011 for a criticism of Karamanolis' view that Plutarch wanted to include Aristotle in the Platonic tradition, although Roskam prudently maintains that, generally speaking, 'Plutarch has no difficulty to associate Aristotle with his own Platonist philosophy' (Roskam 2011, p. 61).

⁴² Karamanolis 2006, p. 82–84.

The subtle workings of secondary authority are hard or even impossible to trace. However, this does not invalidate the general image of Plutarch's broad conception of the Academy's unity. In his interpretation of the *Timaetus*, the search for the ὁρθὴ δόξα of Plato's work is opposed to the very concept of orthodoxy and, consequently, the secondary authority of the tradition is played down in favour of Plato's primary authority.

3.2. Proclus: pulling the Golden Chain

Just like Plutarch, Proclus presents the Platonic tradition as a unity. Ironically, however, his is a unity from which Plutarch seems to be excluded. In the first pages of his *magnum opus*, *Platonic Theology* (I, 1), Proclus provides us with a concise overview of his conception of Platonic history.⁴³ After an initial period of revelation, according to his reconstruction, Platonic philosophy got obscured, before returning better than ever, starting with Plotinus and the Neoplatonists, who unanimously followed him. The Dark Ages of Platonism in between Plato's time and the Neoplatonic revival are usually taken to refer to the Sceptical and Middle Platonic period and thus included Plutarch and his contemporaries.⁴⁴ Proclus, on the other hand, positioned himself at the apex of the tradition, which connects him directly, not only with Plotinus or even Plato, but also with new-found authorities like the Pythagoreans, and ultimately with the gods who first revealed Platonic truth.⁴⁵ Accordingly, we can expect the element of secondary authority to be much more prominent in Proclus' interpretation than in Plutarch's. Tellingly, whereas in Plutarch's work the epithet θεῖος ('divine') is reserved for Plato, Proclus attributes it to Plato and his Neoplatonic

⁴³ See Buckley 2006 on this interesting text.

⁴⁴ Cf. e.g. Whittaker 1987, p. 277–287; Westerink 1987 p. 106–108 and the note by Saffrey & Westerink in their 1968 edition *ad loc.* ('le moyen Platonisme, qu'il [i.e. Proclus] n'ignore pas par ailleurs, est ici passé sous silence et considéré comme appartenant aux "siècles obscurs"').

⁴⁵ The practice of attributing Platonic authority to pre-Platonic sources cannot be discussed in this contribution, although it is central to the evolution of dogmatic Platonism. See e.g. Boys-Stones 2001 who develops his treatment of Platonic authority from this viewpoint.

predecessors alike.⁴⁶ And whereas Plutarch was conscious and probably even proud of his originality, this sentiment is entirely absent in Proclus' works.⁴⁷ Moreover, whereas the Academy can hardly be thought of as an institution in Plutarch's time, Proclus was the *diadochus* of a well-organized and influential school – a framework which enabled and probably even invited to establish a Platonic orthodoxy.⁴⁸

The *Commentary on the Timaeus*, which stands out among Proclus' works for its rich testimony of the earlier tradition, provides us with a picture that meets Proclus' self-presentation. A key passage on the interpretation of *Tim.* 28B, for instance, reproduces the evolution set out in the *Platonic Theology*. Exploring the question as to what kind of generation is meant when Plato's character Timaeus asks whether or not the cosmos has come to be (γένεσθαι), Proclus presents three earlier interpretations (*In Tim.* I, 276, 30–277, 16). (1) Plutarch, Atticus and – according to Proclus – ἄλλοι πολλοὶ τῶν Πλατωνικῶν ('many others among the Platonists') mistakenly thought that the question of cosmic generation should be understood in temporal terms, i.e. that the question is whether or not the cosmos had a first moment of time.⁴⁹ (2) Οἱ δὲ περὶ Κράντορα τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐξηγηταί ('Crantor and his circle of exegetes of Plato') proposed the interpretation that generation of the cosmos should be taken to mean that the cosmos owes its existence to another, superior cause, as opposed to being self-generated. (3) Πλωτῖνος δὲ καὶ οἱ μετὰ Πλωτῖνον φιλόσοφοι, Πορφύριος καὶ Ἰάμβλῖχος ('Plotinus and the philosophers after him, Porphyry and Iamblichus') pointed

⁴⁶ On the attribution of θεῖος to Plato, cf. *supra* n. 16. In Proclus' works, Plato has to share this adjective with important Neoplatonists like Iamblichus, whom Proclus calls θεῖος no less than 61 times in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*.

⁴⁷ Cf. Steel 2006, p. 652: '[N]o philosopher in late antiquity (including Plotinus) wanted to be original, but all tried to be faithful to a tradition of wisdom they inherited. The way Proclus "systematizes" the tradition, by formulating and demonstrating the fundamental principles that were often implicit presuppositions of his predecessors is in itself a remarkable example of philosophical "creativity"'.
⁴⁸ See e.g. Watts 2006, p. 100–110.

⁴⁹ I borrow the expression 'a first moment of time' from Opsomer 2003, p. 146. On the problems involving the more straightforward formulation that Plutarch situated the creation of the cosmos 'in time', see Opsomer 2003, p. 146 n. 39.

out that being generated means being composite, which is a refinement of Crantor's interpretation, since being composite entails being caused by an external cause. Proclus' own judgment follows: ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ ταῦτα μὲν εἶναι φαμεν πάντων ἀληθέστατα ('as for our opinion, we say that these [last-mentioned] views are the truest of all'). Whereas the interpretation of Crantor is remarkably valued, being not yet far removed from Plato's revelation of truth, the accounts of Plutarch and Atticus are unsavoury fruits from the Dark Age of Platonism. The recent Neoplatonic interpretations revert back to the relative purity of Crantor's interpretation, though not without refining and thus perfecting it.

Although the importance of secondary authority is suggested both by Proclus' own sketch of the tradition and by what we find in his comments on *Tim.* 28B, we should once again be wary of drawing conclusions too soon. Although Proclus, of course without using the nineteenth-century term, was certainly aware that he belonged to a distinct, 'Neoplatonic' phase of the Platonic tradition, he was even more aware that this tradition could never replace Plato's texts.⁵⁰ When a careful reading of Plato's *ipsissima verba* contradicts the school doctrine, Proclus does not hesitate to reject the answers that were established by his honoured predecessors.⁵¹ Commenting on the phrase σκεπτέον [...] περὶ αὐτοῦ [i.e. τοῦ κόσμου] πρῶτον, ὅπερ ὑπόκειται περὶ παντός ἐν ἀρχῇ δεῖν σκοπεῖν (*Tim* 28B), Proclus mentions the interpretations of Porphyry and Iamblichus, who take περὶ παντός to mean 'concerning the universe' (*In Tim.* I, 275, 21–276, 4). Proclus – and modern interpreters and translators agree – points out that interpreting περὶ παντός as 'concerning

⁵⁰ Pace Remes 2008, p. 2: '[The term "Neoplatonism"] stems from nineteenth-century German scholarship, and bears no relation to the self-understanding of Plotinus and his followers, who, no doubt, understood themselves as simply the spiritual and philosophical pupils of Plato'. Although it is true that Plotinus did not intend to create a new Platonic movement and that all Platonists understood themselves as pupils of Plato in the first place, it is clear from the first pages of the *Platonic Theology* that at least Proclus was aware that Plotinus' Platonism constituted a turning point in the tradition.

⁵¹ Cf. Buckley 2006, p. 126–127, who shows that the doctrinal unity among the Neoplatonists which is proclaimed in the first pages of the *Platonic Theology* is not fully supported by the facts.

every thing’ makes more sense, both grammatically and philosophically speaking. He concludes his comments on these words by reminding the reader of the primacy of Plato’s authority: ἴδωμεν, ὅπως ὁ φιλόσοφος μέτεισι τὸν λόγον, καὶ συνοδεύσωμεν αὐτοῦ ταῖς ἀποδείξεσι (‘let us see how the philosopher [Plato] continues his account and travel together with him on his demonstrations’, *In Tim.* I, 276, 6–7).

When we take a glance at the fragments of Proclus’ *On the eternity of the world*, most of which are concerned with questions raised by *Tim.* 28B, we get a similar impression, although the balance here seems to be even more in favour of primary authority. Although we cannot be sure – the text as we have it has come to us through the intermediary of Philoponus – it seems like Proclus did not invoke Platonic predecessors.⁵² Nevertheless, the influence of the tradition on the work can hardly be denied. First of all – and this should not come as a surprise – Proclus’ arguments are thoroughly influenced by his Neoplatonic predecessors. Most importantly, the Neoplatonic reformulation of the question central to *Tim.* 28B that Cleary detected in the *Commentary on the Timaeus* – ‘the traditional Platonic question of whether or not the sensible universe is generated [...] is reformulated by Proclus in Neoplatonic terms as whether or not the universe is self-constituted’ – occurs here as well, albeit this time *taciter*, without explicit discussion of the earlier tradition.⁵³ On the other hand, the Platonic tradition also plays a negative role: as we have seen, Atticus’ literal interpretation of *Tim.* 28B is criticized and Plutarch’s similar interpretation was probably implicitly included in this criticism of Dark Age Platonism.

Tarrant aptly describes the function of Proclus’ use of the tradition in the *Commentary on the Timaeus*: ‘Naming names encouraged a predisposition to consider an interpretation favourably or unfavourably, as pedestrian or as inspired depending on whether the interpreter was more like Atticus or Iamblichus,

⁵² Lang & Macro 2001, p. 4 and *passim* assume that we have the whole of Proclus’ text.

⁵³ Cleary 2006, p. 135; see also p. 145–146. On the history of the notion of αὐθυπόστατος (self-constituted), which starts with Iamblichus, see Whittaker 1974.

instead of getting the student to consider each on its merits'.⁵⁴ In *On the eternity of the world* the effect of secondary authority on the reader did not have this explicit pedagogical function but it cannot be ignored. However, in both cases the predisposition was never a compulsion. Whereas Plato's own words were beyond all doubt, the positive predisposition toward a certain interpretation could still be turned around when justification was found lacking. Secondary authority played a more important role in Proclus' works than in Plutarch's, but it never played the title role.

This is not only clear from a comparison between the presentation of Neoplatonic authority and its traces in the text, but also, conversely, from a comparison between the rejection of Middle Platonic authority and its effects. In a painstaking effort to discuss Middle Platonic influence on Proclus beyond explicit references, Whittaker has shown that 'after fading from our field of vision for several centuries items of Middle Platonic doctrine are likely to reappear unacknowledged and thoroughly integrated in the flow of Proclus' argument. [...] Given the patchy nature of our knowledge of Middle Platonism, there must be many instances which we lack the means to identify'.⁵⁵ In the case of the interpretation of *Tim.* 28B we can compare Proclus' discussion of the different meanings of the term γενητός (*In Tim.* I, 279, 30–280, 6) with the similar discussion by the Middle Platonist Calvenus Taurus, who seems to have preferred interpreting the γένεσις described in *Tim.* 28B in the spirit of Crantor and Proclus, viz. γένεσις as dependence on another cause.⁵⁶ However, we can only point to the fact that Calvenus Taurus' account was still known to the sixth-century Neoplatonist Philoponus, who included it in his work *On the eternity of the world*. There is no way of knowing if Proclus' silence on this piece of Middle Platonic philosophy was due to strategy, ignorance or indifference.

Although the shaping of secondary authority, e.g. by excluding the Middle Platonists and privileging the Neoplatonists, is more apparent in Proclus than in Plutarch, describing its sub-

⁵⁴ Tarrant 2004, p. 176.

⁵⁵ Whittaker 1986, p. 291.

⁵⁶ Dillon 1996, p. 242–244.

tleties remains problematic mainly for the same reason we mentioned while discussing the latter: more often than not it remains uncertain whether or not the reports of earlier interpretations sprung from direct acquaintance with the works in question.⁵⁷ What appears as an effort on Proclus' part to shape Platonic authority, may well be caused by lack of accurate information and thus – possibly – an earlier, successful shaping of authority by a predecessor. At any rate, Proclus' own presentation of the tradition is clear and left its trace on his interpretative efforts involving *Tim.* 28B. He saw himself as a link in the golden chain connecting all true Platonists with Plato and, ultimately, with the gods, thereby excluding philosophers like Plutarch. As opposed to how he presented it, this golden chain – we find the metaphor applied to the Platonic succession in actestimony on Proclus⁵⁸ – was constantly forged and reforged throughout the history of Platonism. By placing himself in this tradition and by thus, apparently humbly, subscribing to a splendid chain of secondary authorities, Proclus obviously transferred this authority to his own interpretations.

4. *Shaping authority, bending the waxen nose*

The Platonic tradition yielded two diametrically opposed views on a crucial topic, viz. the creation of the cosmos as described in *Tim.* 28B. Both views claimed to faithfully preserve Plato's authority. This article has shown that the process of shaping authority is at the heart of Platonic exegesis and this in three ways: (1) shaping primary authority, whereby Plato's consistency is defended and employed in different ways, (2) shaping secondary authority by adopting different views on the Platonic tradition and (3) shaping authority by adjusting the balance between primary and secondary authority, for, as we have seen, although primary authority is the more important at any time, secondary authority gains importance in the interpretation of Proclus. Perhaps we could even state that, whereas the recognition

⁵⁷ Tarrant 2004; for the case of Proclus' criticism of Plutarch, see Opsomer 2001 and Rescigno 1997. Cf. Phillips 1997 who expresses similar doubts in his discussion of Proclus' report of Plotinus' and Porphyry's interpretations.

⁵⁸ Damascius, *Vita Isidori* § 151 Zintzen (= fr. 98E Athanassiadi).

of primary authority is a unifying factor throughout dogmatic Platonism, the importance given to secondary authority can account for significant divergences.

And so it is that we arrive at a famous quote by the twelfth-century theologian Alain de Lille. In his book *On catholic faith* or *Against the heretics*, he discusses the immortality of the soul by referring to the Neoplatonic *Liber de causis* (known in the Middle Ages as a work of Aristotle but actually containing material from Proclus) and to Plato's dialogues – Plutarch's Platonic exegesis was forgotten by then:

Plato etiam in Timaeo ait animas post dissolutionem variis affligi poenis. Immortalitatem etiam animae in Phaedone multipliciter probat. Sed quia auctoritas cereum habet nasum, id est in diversum potest flecti sensum, rationibus roborandum est. (Contra haereticos 333A Migne)

In the *Timaeus* Plato tells us that souls, after their dissolution, receive a variety of punishments. Then again, in the *Phaedo* he adduces several proofs for the immortality of the soul. So because authority has a nose of wax – it can be bent in different ways – it needs to be fortified by rational arguments.⁵⁹

By stressing the importance of rational arguments without denying the force of authority, Alain accurately describes the dynamics of secondary authority in Platonism. Moreover, the image teaches us that an interpreter never sees the original nose. It has already been shaped by his predecessors. However – and this concerns primary authority – neither the new interpreter nor his predecessors could just cut off the nose and replace it with another. It has been Plato's nose all along.

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⁵⁹ My translation. I owe this reference to Geert Roskam.

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Abstract

Plato's statement that the cosmos has come to be (γέγονεν, *Timaeus* 28B) led to vigorous debate throughout the Platonic tradition. Some Platonists defended the straightforward reading that the creation

of the cosmos was a real event, whereas others argued that Plato was giving a metaphorical account. This clear-cut dissension on an authoritative text so central to Platonic thought provides us with an interesting case study on how Platonism was a practice of shaping and reshaping authority. In this contribution, I contrast Plutarch's (c. 45–120 CE) interpretation of the account of creation in the *Timaeus* as the description of a real event with Proclus' (c. 412–485 CE) criticism of such interpretation. In order to shed some light on the complex dynamics of authority involved in this debate, I distinguish between primary authority (the authority of Plato) and secondary authority (the authority of certain interpreters and interpretations of Plato's thought). This leads to the observation that Plutarch and Proclus adopted significantly different approaches to both brands of authority and that, although primary authority (i.e. the importance of Plato's consistency) is predominant in both philosophers, shaping secondary authority (i.e. the presentation of the Platonic tradition) plays a larger role in Proclus' thought than in Plutarch's.

DECONSTRUCTING AND
RECONSTRUCTING AUTHORITY.
THE INTERPLAY OF HOMER'S
AND DIO CHRYSOSTOM'S AUTHORITY
IN THE MAKING AND RECEPTION
OF THE *TROJAN ORATION**

1. *Introduction*

On his journey back from Constantinople to Italy in 1427, the humanist Franciscus Philelphus brought with him several Greek manuscripts. Among them some *codices* of Dio's works, including the *Trojan Oration* (discourse 11 in our corpus). The speech caught his attention. *Lego inter nauigandum hominem. Placet: Latinum facio*, he writes in the introduction to his Latin translation of the discourse, later printed in Cremona under the title *De Troia non capta*.¹ In explaining the reasons underlying this project, he outlines the merits of the speech and its author: *Non enim gravitate et auctoritate uiri minus quam rerum ab se scriptarum probatione demonstrationeque mouebar*. Philelphus' translation marks the beginning of Dio's fortunes in the West, and the *Trojan Oration* plays a pivotal role in this respect.²

The speech, addressed to the citizens of the Roman Ilium of Dio's time, sets out to demonstrate that Homer's version of the Trojan war is a lie: Helen was regularly married to Paris,

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¹ Dio Chrysostomus, *De Troia non capta*, translated by F. Philelphus, Cremona 1492. The title *De Troia non capta* translates the phrase ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἰλίου μὴ ἄλῶναι which accompanies the name Τρωικός in the medieval manuscripts.

² On Philelphus' translation see Leotta 2008. An overview of its impact is also offered by Swain 2000, p. 13–14. The success of Philelphus' project is well exemplified by the appearance of a French version of his translation by Jean de Beauvau in the same century, see Trachsler 1996 and 1997.

Hector killed Achilles and not vice-versa, and, above all, the Trojans, not the Greeks, won the ten-year conflict.

The relevance of this oration to the topic of authority is evident. What Dio questions is the centuries-old authority of Homer, *in primis* as a historian of the Trojan war. What he proposes is a new version of the facts based, as we will see, on another authority. Moreover, Dio tries to counter Homer's well-established reputation by giving authority to his own version and, ultimately, to his own 'historiographical' method. Finally, as encapsulated in the phrase *gravitate et auctoritate uiri* of Philelphus' passage quoted above, the acknowledgement of Homer's or Dio's authority will prove crucial for the perceived effectiveness of the speech in several chapters of its reception.

In this paper I will show how Dio's and Homer's authority intertwine in the oration and the premises and outcomes of Dio's project in this regard. As a result of my analysis, I will argue that Dio's intention is not simply to dismantle Homer's authority, but to criticize the way in which authority is established and perpetuated.

In the second part of my paper I will focus on selected episodes of the reception of the speech which are particularly relevant to the topic of authority. I will start from Tzetzes' attack of Dio in defense of Homer, a passage of his *Exegesis in Homeri Iliadem* in which the authority of the two writers and that of the haughty byzantine commentator interplay in a quite peculiar fashion. Jumping about five hundred years ahead, I will then focus on three seventeenth-century works, Christoph Adam Rupert's *Observationes ad Historiae Universalis Synopsis Besoldianam Minorem* (1645), containing an endorsement of Dio's conclusions, and the defenses of Homer against Dio by Georg Heinrich Ursin and Christian Kraye, published in 1679 and 1687 respectively.

2. *Homer and Dio in the Trojan Oration*

2.1. Homer and the acceptance of *doxa*, or how to build authority

The long *prooimion* of the *Trojan Oration* outlines Dio's project. In a balanced rhetorical style, the orator describes how a false

account can establish itself as the authoritative one.³ The initial paragraph is entirely constructed on semantic oppositions concerning the acquisition of knowledge. The difficulty of teaching and learning (διδάσκειν/μανθάνειν) is opposed to the quick efficiency of deceiving (ἐξαπατᾶν), ‘the few that know’ (ὀλίγοι οἱ εἰδότες) are contrasted with ‘the many who do not know’ (πολλοὶ οἱ οὐκ εἰδότες), and the arduousness of acquiring and spreading accurate knowledge is ascribed to the unpleasantness of the truth as opposed to the sweetness of falsehood:

οἶδα μὲν ἔγωγε σχεδὸν ὅτι διδάσκειν μὲν ἀνθρώπους ἅπαντας χαλεπὸν ἐστίν, ἐξαπατᾶν δὲ ῥάδιον. καὶ μανθάνουσι μὲν μόγῃς, ἐάν τι καὶ μάθωσι, παρ’ ὀλίγων τῶν εἰδόντων, ἐξαπατῶνται δὲ τάχιστα ὑπὸ πολλῶν τῶν οὐκ εἰδόντων, καὶ οὐ μόνον γε ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑφ’ αὐτῶν. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀληθὲς πικρὸν ἐστὶ καὶ ἀηδὲς τοῖς ἀνοήτοις, τὸ δὲ ψεῦδος γλυκὺ καὶ προσηγνές (§1).⁴

I am almost certain that while all men are hard to teach, they are easy to deceive. They learn with difficulty – if they do learn anything – from the few that know, but they are deceived only too readily by the many who do not know, and not only by others but by themselves as well. For the truth is bitter and unpleasant to the unthinking, while falsehood is sweet and pleasant.

The focus is then on the difficulty of dismantling falsehood once it has become the received truth:

χαλεποῦ δέ, ὡς ἔφην, ὄντος τοῦ διδάσκειν, τῷ παντὶ χαλεπώτερον τὸ μεταδιδάσκειν, ἄλλως τε ὅταν πολὺν τινες χρόνον ὥσι τὰ ψευδῆ ἀκηκοότες καὶ μὴ μόνον αὐτοὶ ἐξηπατημένοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ πάπποι καὶ σχεδὸν πάντες οἱ πρότερον. οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶ ῥάδιον τούτων ἀφελέσθαι τὴν δόξαν, οὐδ’ ἂν πάνυ τις ἐξελέγχει (§2–3).

But though, as I have said, it is hard for men to learn, it is immensely more difficult for them to unlearn and learn over again, especially when they have been listening to false-

³ For the rhetorical tools employed in this *prooimion* and parallels within Dio’s corpus see for example Vagnone 2003, p. 111.

⁴ The text quoted follows the edition of von Arnim 1893 (unless otherwise stated). The translation is by Cohoon 1932. All translations of Dio’s works quoted in this article are from the Loeb series.

hood for a long time, and not only they themselves, but their fathers, their grandfathers, and, generally speaking, all former generations have been deceived. For it is no easy matter to disabuse these of their opinion, no matter how clearly you show it to be wrong.

The key statement here, and a fundamental theme of the whole speech, is the particular difficulty of ‘unlearning and learning over again’ (μεταδιδάσκειν), a much harder process than simple learning (διδάσκειν). Crucial accomplices of falsehood in its sedimentation process are time and supine transmission over generations, which make its refutation an unrewarding task. This general statement is then applied to the case of Homer, whose authority as singer of the Trojan war hardened in time, generation after generation, being perpetuated by a conservative educational system:

οὐκ ἂν οὖν θαυμάσαιμι καὶ ὑμᾶς, ἄνδρες Ἰλῆϊς, εἰ πιστότερον ἡγήσασθαι Ὅμηρον τὰ χαλεπώτατα ψευσάμενον καθ’ ὑμῶν ἢ ἐμὲ τάλῃθι λέγοντα, κάκῃινον μὲν ὑπολαβεῖν θεῖον ἄνδρα καὶ σοφόν, καὶ τοὺς παῖδας εὐθύς ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὰ ἔπη διδάσκειν οὐθὲν ἄλλο ἢ κατάρας ἔχοντα κατὰ τῆς πόλεως, καὶ ταύτας οὐκ ἀληθεῖς, ἐμοῦ δὲ μὴ ἀνέχοισθε τὰ ὄντα καὶ γενόμενα λέγοντος, ὅτι πολλοῖς ἔτεσιν ὕστερον Ὅμηρον γέγονα (§4).

Therefore, I should not be surprised at you, men of Ilium, if you were going to put greater faith in Homer, notwithstanding his most grievous misstatements against you, than in my present statement of the truth, and hold him to be a wise and inspired man, and to teach your children his epic from their very earliest years, though he has nothing but denunciation for your city, and untruthful at that, but should refuse to listen to me when I tell the facts as they occurred, just because I was born many years later than Homer.

Dio is aware that his project is a difficult one. He speaks against a well-established authority, several centuries after the facts, and his speech is addressed to an audience that has been raised to accept and propagate Homer’s version. Why should they believe him?

Observations of this kind frame the whole speech. We find them again towards the end (§144–146), in a passage in which the old view (παλαιὰ δόξα) is deemed responsible for the pros-

pected non-acceptance of the new account. Deceit (ἀπάτη) and the discernment of falsehood and truth (τὸ ψεῦδος and τὸ ἀληθές) are again key concepts here, and again the way in which most people receive knowledge is described: ‘They merely accept rumor, even when they are contemporary with the time in question, while the second and third generations are in total ignorance and readily swallow whatever anyone says’.⁵

Accordingly, in the final part of the *prooimion* Dio, who is now addressing the citizens of Ilium, but will deliver the same speech in other cities as well, imagines the negative reactions of his audiences, including incomprehension, pretended despise, and attempts to disprove it.⁶ Not even the Trojans will be pleased: ‘for most men,’ Dio says, ‘are so completely corrupted at heart by opinion (οὕτως ἄγαν εἰσὶν ὑπὸ δόξης διεφθαρμένοι τὰς ψυχὰς) that they would rather be notorious for the greatest calamities than suffer no ill and be unknown’ (§6).

The Cynic flavour of these remarks has been particularly stressed by Kindstrand, who focuses on several terminological resemblances between this oration and the so-called *Diogenes* speeches, especially within the semantic area of ‘ignorance’, ‘deceit’, and ‘opinion’.⁷ In fact, Dio may well be employing elements of Cynic philosophy to show on which grounds Homer’s authority was built and perpetuated, but this aspect does not necessarily indicate that the concern of this speech is to support specific views of a single philosophical system. After all, this is a ‘lieu commun philosophique’.⁸ More importantly, the opposition between knowledge and ignorance incorporated in this descrip-

⁵ φήμης ἀκούουσι μόνον, καὶ ταῦτα οἱ γινόμενοι κατὰ τὸν χρόνον ἐκεῖνον· οἱ δὲ δεῦτεροι καὶ τρίτοι τελέως ἄπειροι καὶ ὅ, τι ἂν εἴπῃ τις παραδέχονται ῥαδίως (§146).

⁶ The text of the oration preserves traces of multiple redactions which might be due to its delivery on different occasions: a concise *status quaestionis* in Vagnone 2003, p. 20–21.

⁷ Kindstrand 1973, p. 145–152. See also Wilamowitz 1889, p. 11 *per primam vero partem spirat agrestis cynicorum musa*. A more balanced discussion of Dio’s Cynicism (and Socratism) in Brancacci 2000, who underlines ‘the complexity of the intellectual and literary background which, carefully reworked and assimilated, at times visible and at times dissimulated, lies behind Dio’s discourses’ (p. 260). For a critical stance on Dio’s alleged Cynicism see Desideri 1978, p. 537–547.

⁸ Gangloff 2006, p. 125.

tion is not an end in itself, but has the double purpose of deconstructing Homer's authority and constructing Dio's. The first juxtaposition of the two authors is significantly built around the concepts of falsehood and truth (§4): to Homer's 'most grievous misstatements' (Ὅμηρον τὰ χαλεπώτατα ψευσάμενον) Dio opposes his own 'statement of the truth' (ἐμὲ τᾷληθῇ λέγοντα), and shortly after he refers to himself as telling τὰ ὄντα καὶ γενόμενα, 'the facts as they occurred' (lit. 'the things that are true and happened'), a phrase that recalls epic formulae indicating the superior knowledge of the Muse, the divinely inspired epic poet, and the seer.⁹

The reconstruction of the process that led to the establishment and tenacity of Homer's authority is in itself a form of deconstruction of what the process has built, especially since it is framed in a reflection about the fallibility of human opinion. Homer's pervasive authority is due to his audiences' intellectual laziness and willingness to be deceived, not to the quality of his poetry or the cogency of his account. As Dio will show in what follows, Homer has actively tried to deceive his audience, yet what primarily emerges from the *prooimion* is that his success has been long-lasting because of his audiences' credulity.

This aspect is well conveyed by the word δόξα. As Kim stresses, this is a key word in the oration in its double meaning of 'opinion' and 'reputation'.¹⁰ In fact, Homer's 'established reputation' (the δόξα of §11) is described as essentially a reception phenomenon, nurtured by unverified, rumour-based opinions on him (the δόξα of §3). And δόξα, with its corruptive potential, is also what Dio expects will induce the Trojans to stick to the traditional version (§16).

A decisive element in this picture is the pleasure produced by poetry. As we have seen, the sweetness and pleasantness of false-

⁹ Hom., *Il.* 1.69–70 Κάλχας Θεστορίδης οἰωνοπόλων ἔχ' ἄριστος, / ὃς ἤδη τὰ τ' ἔόντα τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρό τ' ἔόντα ('Calchas, son of Thestor, the wisest of augurs, who knew the things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before'), Hes., *Th.* 31–32 ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν / θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρό τ' ἔόντα ('(scil. the Muses) breathed into me a divine voice so that I could sing the things that were to be and that had been before'), 38 εἰρεῦσαι τὰ τ' ἔόντα τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρό τ' ἔόντα ('(scil. the Muses) telling the things that are and that will be and that were before'). On these passages see for example Stoddard 2004, p. 80–81.

¹⁰ Kim 2010, p. 91–92.

hood is opposed to the bitterness and unpleasantness of the truth in the general ‘gnoseological’ statements at the beginning of the speech, where falsehood is explicitly said to win over the truth ‘through pleasure’ (δι’ ἡδονήν). This aspect is taken up later in the oration, when the Egyptian priest whose version of the war is presented as an alternative to Homer’s account ascribes the permanence of the Greeks in a state of ignorance and deception to their being ‘pleasure-lovers’ (φιλήδονοι):¹¹

τούτου δὲ αἴτιον ἔφη εἶναι ὅτι φιλήδονοί εἰσιν οἱ Ἕλληνες· ἃ δ’ ἂν ἀκούσωσιν ἡδέως τινὸς λέγοντος, ταῦτα καὶ ἀληθῆ νομίζουσι, καὶ τοῖς μὲν ποιηταῖς ἐπιτρέπουσιν ὅ,τι ἂν θέλωσι ψεύδεσθαι καὶ φασιν ἐξεῖναι αὐτοῖς, ὅμως δὲ πιστεύουσιν οἷς ἂν ἐκεῖνοι λέγωσι, καὶ μάρτυρας αὐτοὺς ἐπάγονται ἐνίοτε περὶ ὧν ἀμφισβητοῦσι· παρὰ δὲ Αἰγυπτίοις μὴ ἐξεῖναι μηδὲν ἐμμέτρως λέγεσθαι μηδὲ εἶναι ποιήσιν τὸ παράπαν· ἐπίστασθαι γὰρ ὅτι φάρμακον τοῦτο ἡδονῆς ἐστι πρὸς τὴν ἀκοήν (§42–43).

This, he claimed, was due to Greek love of pleasure. Whatever they delight to hear from anyone’s lips they at once consider to be true. They give their poets full licence to tell any untruth they wish, and they declare that this is the poets’ privilege. Yet they trust them in everything they say and even quote them at times as witnesses in matters of dispute. Among the Egyptians, however, it is illegal to say anything in verse. Indeed they have no poetry at all, since they know this is but the charm with which pleasure lures the ear.

The pleasure produced by poetry is a common theme in ancient literary criticism, and both this and other terms pertaining to the realm of poetic *delectare* can be found in Homeric scholarship and biographical tradition.¹² For example, in one of Homer’s lives the figure of *homoioptoton* is said to produce ‘grace and pleasure’ (χάριν καὶ ἡδονήν), and sweetness is considered a positive element of poetry for educational purposes.¹³ The use of this concept in Dio’s anti-Homeric tirade well exemplifies a technique that the orator uses throughout the discourse, and on which we

¹¹ Von Arnim accepts Dindorf’s emendation φιλήκοοι, but the paradox is flawless: see Vagnone 2003 *ad loc.* for a defense.

¹² See Nünlist 2009, p. 144, and Kim 2010, p. 61–62.

¹³ *Vita Plut.* II, 6 and 35.

will focus repeatedly in the following paragraphs: namely, the employment of elements of Homer's biography, poetry, and reputation normally used as part of his praise as either alleged accomplices of Homer's forgery or arguments in support of the forgery thesis.

The same technique can be detected in Dio's treatment of Homer's antiquity. If ancient sources often mention the poet as the oldest *auctoritas*, and sometimes adduce his temporal closeness to the Trojan war in support of his reliability, Dio ingeniously turns this aspect against Homer. The transmission of unverified opinions from one generation to another makes them more distant from their object, and therefore harder to verify; in this sense, Homer's antiquity has contributed to the establishment of the false account.¹⁴

More subtly, the reference to Homer's antiquity offers Dio a precautionary argument in his own defense, as it shows the rhetor's disadvantaged position. It is precisely by singling out this aspect that Dio neutralizes its power, as for example in §5: even though most people consider time to be the best judge of events, nevertheless they are prone to distrusting late accounts precisely because of their recentness (ὅτι δ' ἂν ἀκούωσι μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον, διὰ τοῦτο ἄπιστον νομίζουσιν).

To sum up, the ingredients of Homer's authority as described by Dio are deceit, falsehood, opinion (*ἀπάτη, ψεῦδος, δόξα*). Their effectiveness is guaranteed by the supine attitude of the audience. Time and pleasure – two typical elements of Homer's praise here unusually employed against him – make for an effective mix.

2.2. Homer the man

After the long preamble, Dio clearly states his intentions (§11): all he is trying to do is to unmask Homer's false statements for the sake of the truth. He does not seek the Trojans' favor, nor does he want to quarrel with Homer. More importantly for our topic, he does not envy him his fame (*δόξα*).

In accordance with this statement, Dio will be exposing the implausibilities and contradictions of the Homeric poems by

¹⁴ On Homer's chronological closeness to the Trojan war and later uses of this aspect see Kim 2010, p. 25–26.

using the text itself (ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς ποιήσεως ἐλέγχων), in a perverted application of Aristarchus' famous principle "Ὅμηρον ἐξ Ὀμήρου σαφηνίζειν."¹⁵ However, Dio's argument actually starts with an attack directed at the *person* of Homer. The first step towards depriving the poet of his authority as a historian is to show the general plausibility of his portrayal as a liar. To this purpose Dio exploits the traditional depiction of Homer as a poor man, turning it against him:

πρῶτον μὲν οὖν φασι τὸν Ὅμηρον ὑπὸ πενίας τε καὶ ἀπορίας προσαιτεῖν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι· τὸν δὲ τοιοῦτον ἀδύνατον ἡγούνται ψεύσασθαι πρὸς χάριν τῶν διδόντων, οὐδ' ἂν τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγειν ὅποια ἔμελλεν ἐκείνοις καθ' ἡδονὴν ἔσεσθαι· τοὺς δὲ νῦν πτωχοὺς οὐδὲν φασιν ὑγιὲς λέγειν, οὐδὲ μάρτυρα οὐδεὶς ἂν ἐκείνων οὐδένα ποιήσαιτο ὑπὲρ οὐδενός, οὐδὲ τοὺς ἐπαίνους τοὺς παρ' αὐτῶν ἀποδέχονται ὡς ἀληθεῖς. ἴσασι γὰρ ὅτι πάντα θωπεύοντες ὑπ' ἀνάγκης λέγουσιν (§15).

In the first place, they say that Homer being constrained by dire poverty, went begging throughout Greece, and yet they think such a man was unable to lie to please those whose dole he received and that he would not have recited the sort of stories that were likely to please them. Beggars of the present time, however, tell nothing but lies, we are told, and nobody would accept the evidence of any of them on any matter whatsoever or receive their praise as sincere. For everyone knows that they are compelled to cajole in all they say.

The motif of Homer's poverty is well known from the biographical tradition. It informs, for example, several episodes of the *Life of Homer* ascribed to Herodotus (*Vita Herodotea* 12–15).¹⁶ Here the statement 'for he was in need of care and the necessities of life' (§16 ἐνδεὴς γὰρ ἦν τῶν ἀναγκαίων καὶ θεραπείης) summarizes well the reason behind Homer's itinerant performances. Dio uses the same detail in *or.* 53.9, but the different spirit is striking: poverty, wandering, and living of poetry are there considered evidence of courage and greatness of mind (ἀνδρεία and μεγαλοφροσύνη).

¹⁵ Montgomery 1901, p. 10.

¹⁶ This work is generally considered a product of the Hellenistic or Roman period falsely ascribed to Herodotus. Coughanowr 1990 attempts an isolated defense of its authenticity. For a recent edition see Vasiloudi 2013.

The consequences the orator draws from this characterization in the *Trojan* are drastic, because the state of necessity is presented as a sufficient reason for masking the truth. Dio achieves this reversal by exploiting a rhetorical precept. The handbook known as *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* suggests to slander the witness, for example by pointing out that he is a poor man:

ἀντιλέγοντας δὲ μαρτυρία δεῖ τὸν τρόπον τοῦ μάρτυρος διαβάλλειν [...]. σκεπτέον δὲ καὶ εἰ φίλος ἐστὶν ὁ μάρτυς ᾧ μαρτυρεῖ, ἢ εἰ μέτεστιν αὐτῷ ποθεν τοῦ πράγματος, ἢ ἐχθρὸς ἐστὶν οὗ καταμαρτυρεῖ, ἢ πένης· τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν διὰ χάριν, οἱ δὲ διὰ τιμωρίαν, οἱ δὲ διὰ κέρδος ὑποπτεύονται τὰ ψευδῆ μαρτυρεῖν.¹⁷

When we are contradicting evidence, we must cast prejudice on the character of the witness [...]. We must also consider whether the witness is a friend to him for whom he is giving evidence, or whether he can in any way be associated with his deed, or whether he is an enemy of the man against whom he is bearing witness, or whether he is poor. For such men are under suspicion of bearing false witness either to show favor or from motives of revenge or for gain.

The motive of Homer, a poor man and itinerant beggar, is clearly gain, κέρδος. Unmasking this motive destroys the poet's reliability, as recommended in contemporary trials. Seen under this lens, such a representation throws a sinister light on the use of Homer as a μάρτυς, a witness, the most ancient and reliable one, typically found in Greek literature, including historiography.¹⁸

¹⁷ Anaxim., *Rhet. ad Alex.* 15, 4–6, translation by E. S. Forster 1946. On this passage in connection with the *Trojan* see for example Kim 2010, p. 97.

¹⁸ D.S. 16.23.5 μάρτυρα τὸν ἀρχαιότατον καὶ μέγιστον τῶν ποιητῶν Ὅμηρον παρείχετο ('as witness he offered the most ancient and greatest of all poets, Homer') and 16.56.7 ὁ δὲ μηνύσας τὸν θησαυρὸν μάρτυρα παρείχετο τὸν ἐπιφανέστατον καὶ ἀρχαιότατον τῶν ποιητῶν ('The man who gave information about the treasure offered as witness the most famous and ancient of poets Homer'), D. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 7.72.3 μαρτύρων ἀξιόπιστότατός τε καὶ ἀρχαιότατος ('the most credible and the most ancient of all witnesses'). For the use of Homer as a source of proofs or arguments see for example Thuc. 1.3.2–3, Pl., *Hipp. min.* 369 c, [Demosth.] 61.25, Philem., *PCG* VII 99.5, Arr., *Alex. an.* 5.6.5, Paus. 2.26.10, Ael., *NA* 10.37, Clem. Alex., *Protr.* 2.36.1.A reference to this widespread Greek practice can be found later in the *Trojan Oration* (§42, see above, p. 125, and below, p. 132).

The most relevant aspect of Dio's procedure in this instance is that the questioning of Homer's usual portrayal as a witness is based on the observation of the contemporary practice ('beggars of the present time, however, tell nothing but lies', τοὺς δὲ νῦν πτωχοὺς οὐδὲν φασιν ὑγιᾶς λέγειν) and on generalizing assumptions that his audience will find reasonable and sensible ('nobody would accept the evidence of any of them on any matter whatsoever', οὐδὲ μάρτυρα οὐδεὶς ἂν ἐκείνων οὐδένα ποιήσαιτο ὑπὲρ οὐδενός). To apply the general statements of the proem, the evidence for Homer's unreliability would have been easily available to anyone, had not people been deceived by the sweetness of Homer's falsehood and by the centuries-old supportive tradition that accepted and depicted him as a reliable source.

The portrayal of Homer as a liar gains further strength from the poet's 'sympathy for liars', as shown by his characterization of Odysseus and Autolycus (§17). Further confirmation comes from the numerous episodes and details of his poems concerning the gods' private lives: how could Homer know about them? His eagerness to invent incredible stories about divine characters provides an *a fortiori* argument in support of the thesis of his lying about humans (§17–24). The widespread metaphorical and allegorical interpretations of these stories, aimed to defend Homer's wisdom, are here seen as yet another sign of Homer's indefensibility, since they demonstrate that truth and sense can only be extracted from his verses by seeking a hidden meaning.¹⁹ It is remarkable that divine inspiration, or any privileged link between the epic poet and the gods, are completely absent from the scene.

2.3. Homer the poet

One of the peculiarities of Dio's project is the use of traits of 'Homer the poet' to refute 'Homer the historian'. The analysis of the poet's rhetorical and compositional techniques serves the purpose of showing his historical unreliability, contrary

¹⁹ §17. On the assumption of Homer's wisdom as the core of the allegorical interpretation see for example Kim 2010, p. 6. Dio's corpus contains other references to the allegorical interpretation of Homer, to be understood in the wide sense of finding deep or hidden meanings in his poetry: see Vagnone 2003, p. 14–16.

to the standard procedure of untangling the literary devices from the historical core, a tradition of which Dio was certainly aware.²⁰ Furthermore, since Homer's reputation is primarily that of a poet, his poetical virtues are also called into question as part of its deconstruction.

In exploring Homer's poetical ability Dio uses the same technique as in describing the establishment of his authority and in portraying him as an unreliable witness: concepts found in the scholiastic tradition and indicative of a generally appreciative criticism are now exploited in their deconstructive potential.²¹

An example is offered by the discussion of the narrative structure of the *Iliad*. The artificial order of the events is considered a typical trick of liars (§24) rather than an appropriate and praiseworthy narrative device, as for example in *sch. B Il.* 1.8–9 and 2.494–877. Similarly, Homer's selectivity, a skillful technique according to passages such as *sch. BT Il.* 1.449a, has a sinister connotation in §26. Even the basic assumption that Homer has carefully planned the structure of his poems (cf. for example *sch. Il.* 2.260a, 10.252–253a, 260) is subverted in §35–36: for Dio Homer is a clumsy improviser.²²

And his structural choices also undermine the powerfulness of the *Iliad*. In Dio's view, for example, the beginning ἀπὸ τῆς μῆνιδος (that is, from Achilles' wrath) is a bad poetical choice: a different beginning would have made the audience 'more sympathetic and interested' (§28 εὐνότερον καὶ προθυμότερον).²³ The incipit is discussed at length in the surviving scholia on the first line of the *Iliad*, and usually considered a source of *pathos* and engagement, in striking contrast with Dio's judgment.

2.4. Homer the historian

Besides offering an innovative characterization of Homer as a man and showing some technical flaws of his poems, Dio offers a radical revisionism of Homer as a historian.

²⁰ See for example *or.* 53.5, where Zeno and Antisthenes are mentioned for their attempt to interpret the poem as a mix of opinion (δόξα) and truth (ἀλήθεια).

²¹ A fundamental study of this topic is Hunter 2009.

²² On these three aspects see Hunter 2009, p. 52–53 and 59–60.

²³ A discussion in Hunter 2009, p. 56.

The refutation of Homer's historical account follows the method of *ἀνασκευή*, a rhetorical exercise defined in Pseudo-Hermogenes' *Progymnasmata* as 'an overturning of something that has been proposed' (*ἀνατροπή τοῦ προτεθέντος πράγματος*).²⁴ The same passage lists the possible classes of arguments to be used to this purpose: 'You will refute by argument from what is unclear (*ἐκ τοῦ ἀσαφοῦς*), implausible (*ἐκ τοῦ ἀπιθάνου*), impossible (*ἐκ τοῦ ἀδυνάτου*); from the inconsistent, also called the contrary (*ἐκ τοῦ ἀνακολούθου τοῦ καὶ ἐναντίου καλουμένου*); from what is inappropriate (*ἐκ τοῦ ἀπρεποῦς*), and from what is not advantageous (*ἐκ τοῦ ἀσυμφόρου*)'. In the development of the oration, Dio regularly uses similar arguments to show the bugs of the Homeric account. The most frequent is the argument *ἐκ τοῦ ἀδυνάτου*, clearly appealing to common reasoning and observation: see for example the uses of *εἰκός* ('likely'), *δυνατόν* ('possible') and its opposite in §54, 60, 70, 98, 112.

These kinds of arguments are found throughout the speech, and become particularly frequent after the introduction of a new authority, an Egyptian priest who offers an alternative version of the facts (§37). Allegedly, the priest relies on records found in Egyptian temples, written on columns and ultimately based on the account related by Menelaus himself during his journey in Egypt.

The start of this new section refers to the same problem of ignorance, belief, deceit that, as we have seen, frames the whole speech:

ἐγὼ οὖν ὥς ἐπυθόμην παρὰ τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἱερέων ἐνδὸς εὖ μάλα γέροντος ἐν τῇ Ὀνούφι, ἄλλα τε πολλὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων καταγελώντος ὥς οὐθὲν εἰδόντων ἀληθὲς περὶ τῶν πλείστων, καὶ μάλιστα δὴ τεκμηρίῳ τούτῳ χρωμένου ὅτι Τροίαν τέ εἰσι πεπεισμένοι ὥς ἀλοῦσαν ὑπὸ Ἀγαμέμνονος καὶ ὅτι Ἑλένη συνοικοῦσα Μενελάῳ ἠράσθη Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ ταῦτα οὕτως ἄγαν πεπεισμένοι εἰσὶν ὅφ' ἐνδὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐξαπατηθέντες ὥστε καὶ ὁμόσαι ἕκαστος (§ 37).

²⁴ [Herm.] *Prog.* 5.1, in the translation of Kennedy 2003. See also Theon, *Prog.* 5, 93–96 Spengel = p. 57–61 Patillon, Quint., *Inst. Or.* 2.4.18–19. On this aspect see Hunter 2009, p. 54 and Kim 2010, p. 116–119. The use of this rhetorical technique is already identified by Eustath., *in Il.* 4.163–165 (1.727, 12 van der Valk): ὁ Δίῳ ἐπηγωνίσαστο ἀνασκευάσαι τὰ Τρωϊκά ('Dio exerted himself to refute the Trojan account').

I, therefore, shall give the account as I learned it from a certain very aged priest in Onuphis, who often made merry over the Greeks as a people, claiming that they really knew nothing about most things, and using as his chief illustration of this, the fact that they believed that Troy was taken by Agamemnon and that Helen fell in love with Paris while she was living with Menelaus; and they were so thoroughly convinced of this, he said, being completely deceived by one man, that everybody actually swore to its truth.

According to the priest, the ignorance and indifference (*ἀμαθία* and *ἀμέλεια*) of the new generations are responsible for the discarding of these Egyptian records (§38). This view is in unison with Dio's previous reconstruction of the intellectual laziness responsible for the acceptance of Homer's account. And this statement is framed in a more general denunciation of human ignorance, which shows significant consonances with the proem:

τούτου δὲ μηθὲν εἶναι νόσημα χαλεπώτερον μήτε ἐνὶ μήτε πολλοῖς ἢ ὅταν τις ἀμαθὴς ὦν σοφώτατον ἑαυτὸν νομίζῃ. τοὺς γὰρ τοιοῦτους τῶν ἀνθρώπων μηδέποτε δύνασθαι τῆς ἀγνοίας ἀπολυθῆναι (§39).

He maintained that no affliction more serious could befall either individual or community than when an ignoramus held himself to be most wise, since such men could never be freed from their ignorance.

The priest particularly disapproves of the Greeks' attitude towards their poets, and criticizes their habit of trusting and quoting them as witnesses (*μάρτυρας*, §42).²⁵

After the presentation of the priest's point of view, Dio reports his account in more detail, adding, he says, 'my reasons for thinking his words to be true' (§43 *ἐξ ὧν ἐδόκει μοι ἀληθῆ τὰ λεγόμενα*).

From now on we hear two voices, that of the Egyptian priest, who relies on sources which he considers authoritative, and that of Dio, whose arguments are not based on *a priori* authority, but on probability and reasoning. The witness is presented as reliable and well-informed. He tells the story in a straightforward way and supports it with arguments by plausibility. This char-

²⁵ Cf. n. 18.

acterization does not imply the reality of Dio's encounter and the historicity of the priest; as shown by the easily recognizable winks at Herodotus and Plato (*Tim.* 21e–25d), he is most certainly a literary construction.²⁶ What is relevant here is that this literary construction provides an example of ascertainment of the truth which is free from the flaws found in Homer, and can offer a guide as to how an account should be verified and, once accepted, become history.

The intertwining voices of Dio and the priest are not easy to untangle. In this interplay of sources and intellectual verification lies Dio's 'historiographical' method. Dismantling falsehood, ascertaining and showing the truth, appealing to the audience's experience and common sense are at the core of Dio's project, as opposed to Homer's procedure, which consists in assembling a false account, concealing the truth, deceiving and confusing the audience through the pleasure of poetry. The long-term effects of Homer's project are now well known to Dio's audience. It is on this awareness that the orator lays the foundations of his own authority.

2.5. Dio's revisionism: a *paignion*?

Dio is not a forerunner in his Homeric revisionism. Several sources are known to have questioned the reliability of Homer's account in matters of detail or more substantial aspects, and to have discussed the role of his poetry in education.²⁷ Yet what the *Trojan* presupposes, depicts, and systematically subverts is the familiar scenario of Homer's authority, a given since well before Dio's time.

Bedrock of education and literary culture throughout the Greek and Greco-Roman world, Homer is uninterruptedly quoted in diverse contexts in the extant Greek and Latin literature.²⁸ The predominance of Homeric texts among the papyrus finds in Egypt proves that they circulated widely at different

²⁶ See for example Hunter 2009, p. 48–49.

²⁷ Lamberton 1997, p. 35–37. Kim 2010 specifically focuses on Dio's and similar 'subversive' projects.

²⁸ For an overview of Homer's reputation and influence in antiquity see particularly Lamberton 1997 and Kim 2010, p. 4–10.

levels and confirms the evidence provided by the literary sources as to their pervasiveness in the Greek speaking world.²⁹

Dio himself does not back out of this tradition. In collecting previous opinions about Homer's excellence, his oration 53 *On Homer* presents itself as a sort of doxographical encomium. The speech contains several ingredients that are overturned or significantly omitted in the *Trojan*. For example, the encomium starts with a reference to the words of Democritus, who focuses on Homer's 'divinely inspired genius' (φύσεως ... θεαζούσης).³⁰ Dio interprets these words as 'indicating the belief that without a divine and superhuman nature (ἄνευ θείας καὶ δαιμονίας φύσεως) it is impossible to produce verses of such beauty and wisdom'. The contrast with the hyper-humanized Homer of oration 11 is striking. Moreover, Homer's verses are here described as beautiful and wise (καλὰ and σοφά) and their contents as useful and beneficial (ὠφέλιμα and χρήσιμα), while pleasure (ἡδονή), grace (χάρις), and powerfulness (δύναμις) are indicated as constitutive elements of his poetry.³¹ According to Dio, these traits impressed even Plato, whose criticism of the poet (*Resp.* 10, 606e–607a) is then considered at length and contrasted with the apologetic allegorical tradition. Dio cannot choose between Plato and Homer, such is his familiarity with both, such is the respect that they both deserve. The two authors' *σημνότης* leads to suspension of judgment.³²

Dio's *corpus* also bears evidence of Homer's well documented centrality in education at different levels.³³ Homer or Homeric characters are the main subject of several speeches: besides *or.* 11 and 53, also *or.* 55, 56, 57, 61 must be mentioned, and a lost work in defense of Homer against Plato in four books.³⁴ In the oration *On Training for Public Speaking* Homer is said to come 'first and

²⁹ On Homeric papyri see Haslam 1997.

³⁰ Democr., fr. 21 D-K. On Homer's divine inspiration see Kindstrand 1973, p. 116–119.

³¹ *Or.* 53.1, 2, 4, and 11. For references to Homer's *sophia* in Dio see Kindstrand 1973, p. 124–127.

³² *Or.* 53.2–3.

³³ A list of passages concerning Homer in Dio's *corpus* is provided by Kindstrand 1973, p. 19–26.

³⁴ Suda s.v. Δ 1240 Ὑπὲρ Ὁμήρου πρὸς Πλάτωνα δ'.

in the middle and last, in that he gives of himself to every boy and adult and old man just as much as each of them can take' (*or.* 18.8). Other passages specifically concern Homer's reputation. In *or.* 61.1 a praising but scholarly approach is contrasted with the attitude of most people (οἱ πολλοί), who exhibit an empty admiration based on opinion (δόξα). Finally, an important parallel for the authority of Homer among the Trojans as outlined in our speech is found in *or.* 36.9, where the citizens of Borys-thenes are said to know the *Iliad* very well and to display a deep appreciation for Homer. As in *or.* 53.6, the cultural pervasiveness of Homeric poetry here presupposed is an element of praise, and not part of bitter reflections on human credulity and poetic deceit.

How to reconcile these passages with the devastating critique carried out in the *Trojan*? Is the speech to be taken seriously? On a general level, contradictions among different orations should not be overemphasized. Our perception of Dio's speeches as a corpus is certainly different from that of his contemporaries, as most of the orations were designed for and delivered on specific occasions.³⁵ Moreover, the analysis of the speech carried out so far has shown its complexity and serious concerns, and characterized it as more than just an empty rhetorical exercise. Two voices interplay throughout the oration, that of Dio the sophist and that of Dio the philosopher. The former can unscrupulously employ elements belonging to the same appreciative tradition he embraces elsewhere and exploit all the available rhetorical means and some of the techniques of literary criticism to dismantle Homer's authority. The latter frames a rhetorical refutation in the broader problem of acquisition of knowledge and formation of collective memory, literary canon, and historical tradition.

An interesting key to the interpretation of the speech is offered by Dio's biographer Synesius. When praising the qualities of his orations, Synesius focuses on the originality (ιδιότης) of Dio's inventions, which he exemplifies by referring to ὁ Ῥοδιακός τε καὶ ὁ Τρωικός, εἰ δὲ βούλει, καὶ ὁ τοῦ κώνωπος ἔπαινος ('the *Rhodian* (*or.* 31), the *Trojan* and, if you like, even

³⁵ Van Nuffelen 2011, p. 147.

the *Praise of the Mosquito*).³⁶ The latter, now lost, is clearly an additional, provocative example, as the sequence εἰ δὲ βούλει and the use of καὶ show: for *even* the playful works (παίγνια), Synesius continues, display Dio's qualities and the seriousness of his compositional efforts. The wording of the latter sentence, ἐσπουδάσθη γὰρ τῷ Δίῳ καὶ τὰ παίγνια, is particularly meaningful if one considers it within the light of the phrase ἀσπούδαστα παίγνια used in Syn., *Dion* 7, 1135 Migne, linking, as expected, the noun παίγνια to the adjective 'not in earnest'. If, as it seems, the γὰρ-sentence only refers to the *Praise of the Mosquito*, which displays the high quality of Dio's technique *despite* being a purely playful speech, then the *Rhodian* and the *Trojan* are certainly *not* among the παίγνια for Synesius. The credibility of its contents and the seriousness of Dio's attack of Homer are not addressed explicitly, perhaps because they were not questioned in Synesius' time (IV–V century). However, in line with his recognition that even the παίγνια display Dio's literary 'seriousness', we may conclude that the combination of sophistic manipulation and deepness of philosophical concerns at the core of the *Trojan Oration* well suits a σπουδαῖον παίγνιον: a work, fictional in some of its ingredients, yet proposing a serious reflection on the problem of knowledge, sources, and literary authority.

3. On Dio's Nachleben in the Byzantine age: *Tzetzets and Dio Coproston*

The biography of Dio included in Philostratus' *Life of the Sophists*, composed in the second quarter of the third century, starts with praising words:

Δίῳνα δὲ τὸν Προυσαῖον οὐκ οἶδ' ὅ τι χρὴ προσειπεῖν διὰ τὴν ἐς πάντα ἀρετὴν, Ἀμαλθείας γὰρ κέρασ ἦν, τὸ τοῦ λόγου, ζυγκείμενος μὲν τῶν ἄριστα εἰρημένων τοῦ ἀρίστου.

As for Dio of Prusa, I do not know what one ought to call him, such was his excellence in all departments; for, as the proverb says, he was a 'horn of Amalthea', since in him

³⁶ Syn., *Dion* 3, 1124 Migne. The passage is discussed in detail by Brancacci 1985, p. 279–281.

is compounded the noblest of all that has been most nobly expressed.³⁷

The initial statement οὐκ οἶδ' ὅ τι χρὴ προσεῖπεν, 'I do not know what one ought to call him', seems appropriate to introduce this brief discussion of Dio's *Nachleben*.³⁸ The traditional nickname Chrysostom, 'of golden mouth', which according to Photius Dio received one generation after his lifetime, is the target of puns in the Byzantine period, and its use and manipulation are revealing of the shifting appreciation of his work.³⁹ We find it firstly in Menander Rhetor, who uses it as a common and well-known designation; and Themistius seems to allude to it when he calls the orator Δίωνα τὸν χρυσοῦν τὴν γλῶτταν ('Dio of the golden tongue').⁴⁰

A different, less flattering tradition is presupposed by the Byzantine Arethas (c. 860–912). In commenting on an anecdote about Gelo of Syracuse's unpleasant breath contained in Lucian's *Hermotimus*, the archbishop cursorily refers to a similar story involving Dio Chrysostom, from which he deduces that the well-known nickname alluded not to the beauty of Dio's eloquence, but, ironically, to his disagreeable breath.⁴¹ In Arethas' biography of Dio the same detail is traced back to a iambic poem by Gregory of Nazianzus: here Arethas concludes that the nickname Χρυσόστομος was a euphemism for Ὀζόστομος, 'of foul mouth'.⁴² More provocatively, the compound Χρυσόστομος will later be changed to Κοπρόστομος, 'of filthy mouth', by Joannes

³⁷ Philostr., *VS* 1.7, 486–487 translation by Wright 1921. On the chronology and addressee of the work see Avotins 1978, who argues for a date between 231 and 237.

³⁸ The appendix III of Von Arnim's fundamental edition (vol. II) offers a collection of *de vita et scriptis Dionis testimonia et iudicia*, which gives an idea of the reception of Dio as a writer from Philostratus to the Byzantine period. An overview of his *Nachleben* up to Philostratus in Desideri 1978, p. 1–60. See also Schamp 2009 and Brancacci 1985.

³⁹ Phot., *Bibl. cod.* 209, p. 165 b Bekker.

⁴⁰ Men. Rh. p. 390, 2 Spengel; Them., *or.* 5, p. 63 d Harduin.

⁴¹ *Sch.* Luc. 70.34, p. 242 Rabe. A similar trait characterizes Euripides according to ancient anecdotal and biographical sources: see Kannicht 2004, 96 (test. 102–104) and Gavrillov 1996.

⁴² Von Arnim 1896, p. 328, Greg. Naz., *Carm. mor.* 1.2.10, 808–817; see Schamp 2009, p. 275.

Tzetzes, as a sign of strong disagreement with Dio's treatment of Homer in the *Trojan*.

The relevant passage belongs to Tzetzes' *Exegesis in Iliadem*, a long prose commentary completed around 1140. The *Exegesis* is only a small part of his wide and various work on Homer. It was preceded by Tzetzes' own Trojan epic (*Antehomerica*, *Homeric* and *Posthomeric*, composed around 1133) and followed, later in the same decade and probably in the sixties, by allegorical interpretations in verse of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.⁴³ Allegorical readings can already be found in the *Exegesis*, and the passage under discussion contains a very clear statement of how Homer should and should not be understood.

Tzetzes is a very peculiar kind of commentator. Bilious and arrogant, he launches numerous verbal attacks against previous interpreters, while presenting himself as a perfect master of knowledge and an expert in all aspects of epic poetry, from metre to vocabulary, from historical contents to allegorical interpretation.⁴⁴ In violently questioning the authority of previous commentators and emphasizing his own undisputable superiority, Tzetzes stands out from the crowd of anonymous Byzantine commentators, as his exegesis is not meant to be simply *ancilla* to the commented work.⁴⁵

Some of these traits can be detected in Tzetzes' attack of Dio. Commenting upon the word *θεά* ('goddess') of the first line of the *Iliad*, Tzetzes explains that the invocation of only one Muse is an Attic figure of speech, *perilepsis*, consisting in the inclusion of a multiplicity in a singularity: in fact, unlike other poets, Homer embraces each subject proper to each Muse, and not just one of them, a view stemming from the assumption of his omnicomprehensive wisdom.⁴⁶ And yet, Tzetzes says, some of the new intellectuals (*νέοι σοφοί*) dare maintain that the

⁴³ Braccini 2011, p. 43.

⁴⁴ Tzet., *Sch. in Antehom.* 124, p. 128, 20–129, 1 Leone: οὐδείς γὰρ οὐδέποτε ὡς ἡμεῖς μετρικὴν τέχνην καὶ ποιητικὴν ἠκριβώσατο ('for nobody ever mastered the metrical and poetical techniques as thoroughly as I do'). See Braccini 2011, p. 44–45.

⁴⁵ On this aspect see Budelmann 2002.

⁴⁶ Tzet., *Ex. in Il.* p. 50–52 Hermann. A new edition by Papathomopoulos (Athens 2007) is now available.

divine Homer wrote fictionally (μυθικῶς) rather than allegorically (ἀλληγορικῶς). Among these σοφοί, insultingly called illiterate (ἀναλφάβητοι) and described as ‘illegitimately priding themselves on the name of philosophy’ (ψευδῶς τῷ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ὀνόματι ἐγγαυρούμενοι), he mentions Dio of Prusa, who dared depict Homer as the father of lies (ψευσμάτων πατέρα). To this erroneous interpretation Tzetzes opposes his own exegesis, an allegorical reading of the *Iliad*, which will solve Dio’s aporia.

The passage culminates in a tirade against Dio. The orator is addressed, together with all ancient and modern authors who maintained senseless opinions on Homer, as Dio of Prusa Coprostom (Κοπρόστομος). These σοφοί are invited to read previous works on Homer, which will acquaint them with the poet and show ‘that there was no man on earth of his caliber’.⁴⁷ At this point, as a more practical alternative and as the peak of the discourse, Tzetzes offers his own work, which will explain Homer and save his authority from misunderstandings.

It is important to notice that Tzetzes makes his judgment about Dio not in the context of an appreciation of his production, but in that of the study of Homer. It is the acceptance of Homer as a reliable author, even in the context of a non-literal interpretation of his poems, that requires him to take a stance on the *Trojan*. Therefore, if insulting attacks are not unusual in Tzetzes’ production, in this specific case the violence also stems from the strongly defensive tone. Furthermore, the passage is neuralgic as a declaration of Tzetzes’ exegetical project, and significantly marks a divide between the literal interpretation of the poems, which can induce the incompetent reader to doubt their truthfulness, and the allegorical one, which – in his view – identifies their real meaning.

Nowhere in his work does Tzetzes call into question the historicity of Homer’s account. On the contrary, he underlines its reliability elsewhere in the *Exegesis* by stating that Homer lived a few decades after the Trojan war and derived his story from a reliable source (Odysseus or one of his companions, or a report by Apollo, Sisyphus or Dictys), through an accurate selection

⁴⁷ Tzetzes is here borrowing the Homeric line ‘no man living could equal him’, τῷ δ’ οὐ πῶ τις ὁμοίος ἐπιχθόνιος γένητ’ ἀνὴρ (*Il.* 2.553).

and personal elaboration (ἐπικρύψεις) of the materials.⁴⁸ Unlike Dio in the *Trojan*, Tzetzes here singles out the selectivity and the poetical embellishment of Homer's account as positive aspects of his works.⁴⁹

More subtly, Tzetzes' attempt to stress the credibility of the commented author is part of a peculiar phenomenon of identification. Elsewhere in his production the Byzantine calls himself 'Homer-lover as nobody else' (*Sch. in Antehom.* p. 101, 3 Leone), and besides accepting, defending, and perpetuating Homer's reputation, he also maintains to have a special relation with him. A synthesis of the latter aspect is offered by a further passage of the *Exegesis*, where Tzetzes declares to be son of Homer, a son who would have made him proud.⁵⁰ And in striking contrast with Dio's portrayal of Homer as an unreliable beggar, Tzetzes is also proud to share a *noble* poverty with the poet.⁵¹

If we set the passage about Dio against this background, it becomes clear that in attacking the orator the Byzantine does not simply want to rehabilitate Homer's reputation. In line with his profile, he wants to confirm his own authority as both the best interpreter of Homer and the new Homer.

For the complexity of the project in which the attack of Dio is framed, Tzetzes is very far from other brief comments on the *Trojan Oration* that have come down to us from the Byzantine period. If in Photius we only find a descriptive statement concerning the anti-Homeric nature of the speech, Arethas describes it as a clever rhetorical construction, more persuasive than true.⁵² The commentator criticizes in particular the lengthy preamble, which suspiciously tries to gain credibility by anticipating some of the core arguments. Arethas does not explicitly address the problem of Homer's reliability, but the reference to persuasion as opposed to the truth indicates his acceptance of the tradi-

⁴⁸ *Exeg. in Il.* p. 25 and 27 Hermann, Braccini 2011, p. 45–46.

⁴⁹ See also Cesaretti 1991, p. 181–182 for passages from the *Allegories on the Iliad* in which selectivity, beginning ἀπὸ τῆς μήνιδος, and artificial narrative order are seen as admirable aspects of Homer's poetical technique.

⁵⁰ *Exeg. in Il.* p. 6 Hermann.

⁵¹ *Exeg. in Il.* p. 37 Hermann.

⁵² Phot. *Bibl. cod.* 209, p. 166 a 12–16 Bekker, Areth. *sch. in D. Chrys. or.* 11, p. 107 Sonny.

tional version. It might be relevant that Arethas' scholium on *or.* 11.92, commenting on Dio's statement that Homer was the first to write about the Trojan war, refers to Dictys the Cretan as a contemporary witness to the war, and to bronze tablets containing his chronicle allegedly found during Nero's lifetime. Arethas stresses their agreement with Homer's account, thus implying his acceptance of this version rather than Dio's. Nevertheless, the archbishop's distancing himself from Dio is very different, in both aims and tones, from Tzetzes' attack, and does not show the same concern for authority.

4. *On Dio's Nachleben in the seventeenth century: Rupert, Ursin, and Kraye*

The problem of Homer's and Dio's authority and that of the ascertainment of the truth about the Trojan war emerge again in the seventeenth century, when the *Trojan Oration* became widely known and received scholarly attention.⁵³ In the episodes of its reception that I will now analyze, the focus is less on literary and textual aspects than on the provocative anti-Homeric thesis at the core of the speech.

The works I will consider are by no means the only modern treatments of the *Trojan Oration* and its reliability. Seventeenth-century Germany in particular produced several pamphlets and academic dissertations addressing the historical core of the speech. Among them, my choice has fallen on treatises in which the concept of authority is particularly relevant, and drives the critical response to Dio's project.

The first episode on which I will focus dates to 1646, when the German jurist and professor of history Christoph Adam Rupert, one year before dying at the age of thirty-five, com-

⁵³ For an overview of the modern fortunes of Dio see Swain 2000. On some episodes of the *Nachleben* of Dio between the XVI and XIX century we can now count on Amato 2011; cf. also Brancacci 1985, p. 288, n. 48, Desideri 1978, p. 522, n. 70. Most recently Vagnone 2014 lists and very briefly comments upon four dissertations on the historicity of the Trojan war and on Dio's *Trojan Oration* produced between the last decades of the XVII century and the first decades of the XVIII, including those by Ursin and Kraye here analyzed.

pleted his *Observationes ad Historiae Universalis Synopsin Besoldianam Minorem*, later edited by Tobias Gutberleth.⁵⁴

This work contains a long excursus on the Trojan reign. Within it, a detailed discussion of Dio's *Trojan Oration* is placed after pages dense with erudite references regarding the war (p. 64–79). At the beginning of this discussion, Rupert announces that the reliability of the authorities on the Trojan facts he has just mentioned could be called into question, and envisions the surprised reaction of the reader:

Quamuis et illorum fides, quos uelut approbatos nominauimus, et e quorum mente hactenus locuti sumus, de rebus Troianis et excidio Troiae, in dubium uocari possit. Quid ais? tunc Priamum occisum, Troiam a Graecis captam et inflammata, contra tantam Scriptorum multitudinem negare audes? (p. 64–65).

However, one may even call into question the reliability of those whom we mentioned as established, and from whose opinions we have been drawing so far in this treatise, regarding the Trojan events and the fall of Troy. 'What are you saying? Dare you deny that Priam was killed, Troy taken and burnt by the Greeks, against such a big crowd of Writers?'

Aware of this *immensa multitudo*, unanimous in supporting Homer's version, Rupert underlines Dio's singularity: *Unus repertus est Dio Chrysostomus Cocceianus* (and here a parenthesis outlines his literary merits and emperor Trajan's admiration for him⁵⁵) *qui tantae multitudini se solum obiecit et quae magno consensu recepta erant, multis rationibus refutauit*.⁵⁶ Dio's Egyptian source is mentioned afterwards: *ad firmandam enim sententiam suam adfert*

⁵⁴ The work was already known to Ursin, who cites it in his 1679 treatise. The text of Rupert's *Observationes* is available online in the digital collection of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek at <http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/>. In his brief lifetime Rupert composed other historical pamphlets: see his record in the Consortium of European Research Libraries Thesaurus (<http://thesaurus.cerl.org/>). The *Synopsis Besoldiana* is the work of Christoph Besold (1577–1638), jurist, political thinker, historian, and professor in Tübingen.

⁵⁵ The source about Trajan and Dio is Philostratus, *VS* 1.7.

⁵⁶ 'Dio Chrysostom Cocceianus was the only one found [...] who hurled himself, alone, against such a big crowd, and refuted with several arguments what had been accepted with great consensus'.

narrationem Sacerdotis Aegyptii de bello Troiano, ex antiquis Aegyptiorum monumentis repetitam (p. 65).⁵⁷

There follows a summary of Dio's arguments and historical reconstruction, concluded by a clear statement of Rupert's opinion:

Ut ingenue fatear, ipsam ueritatem loqui mihi uidetur Chrysostomus; et qui scit, quantum Aegyptiorum monumenta Graecorum narrationes praegrauent, uix aliter affectus erit. Aegyptiorum namque potissima cura fuit, ut omnium memoria quam diligentissime conseruaretur. Contra apud Graecos antiquitates uel sepultae, uel miris fabulis inuolutae (p. 66–67).

Frankly speaking, Chrysostom seems to me to be telling the truth. And whoever knows how greatly the monuments of the Egyptians preponderate over the accounts of the Greeks would hardly have a different impression. For the Egyptians had the greatest care to preserve memory of everything as diligently as possible. Among the Greeks, on the contrary, ancient history is either buried or entangled in marvelous stories.

The main argument in favor of Dio is the general reliability and accuracy of Egyptian sources in preserving memories of the past, as opposed to Greek sources, in which those memories are *sepultae* or *miris fabulis inuolutae*. In line with the high number of *auctoritates* quoted in the whole bulk of his *Observationes*, here Rupert is firstly concerned with sources, their reliability, their authority. Only secondarily does he add an internal argument, the *prodigiosum*, which is adduced only in support to the main argument, and soon related, again, to the authority of the *grauissimi Scriptores* who commended Egyptian sources:

Sed et cum nobis de eo constet, neminem e Scriptoribus Graecis fuisse, qui de bello Troiano non prodigiosum aliquod, et incredibile retulerit; uel hoc ipsum Aegyptiorum monumenta fauorabiliora reddidit. Est ea mentientium conditio, ut in mendacio deprehensi fidem non mereantur amplius. [...] Multo minus non manifesta in re sequi possumus Graecos, tot fabularum in rebus Troicis manifestos;

⁵⁷ 'To confirm his opinion, he adduces the account of an Egyptian priest on the Trojan war, derived from ancient Egyptian memorials'.

et Aegyptiaca monumenta reicere, grauissimis Scriptoribus commenda (p. 67).

But as it is clear to us, in this regard, that there was no Greek writer who did not relate some prodigious or unbelievable detail on the Trojan war, indeed this fact itself makes the Egyptian memorials preferable. ‘Such is the condition of liars, that once caught lying they no longer deserve trust’.⁵⁸ [...] Let alone can we – in a controversial matter – follow the Greeks who are incontrovertibly guilty of false stories regarding the Trojan events, and reject the Egyptian monuments, praised by the most authoritative writers.

The same topic is addressed, with different conclusions but a somewhat similar attitude towards the authority of the sources, by two other scholars in the second half of the century, namely Georg Heinrich Ursin and Christian Krayer. The former (1647–1707), director of the Gymnasium Poeticum of Regensburg, devoted the appendix of his *Observationum philologicarum liber unus*, published in 1679, to the refutation of the *Trojan*.⁵⁹ Eight years later, Krayer, author of a dissertation on the same topic defended at the University of Wittenberg, follows the same pro-Homeric tradition.⁶⁰

Ursin’s anti-Dionean stance is clear from the first paragraphs of his appendix, entitled *Oratio de Ilio capto*. Dio’s project is presented as a solitary opposition to a multitude of authoritative writers and thus it is destined to fail. To the *communis totius anti-*

⁵⁸ Rupert ascribes this sentence to *Polybius aliique magni viri*, without specific references. A similar statement can be found in Plb. 12.25a.2: ἐπειδὴν γὰρ ἐν ἡ δεύτερον εὑρεθῇ ψεῦδος ἐν τοῖς συγγράμμασι, καὶ τοῦτο γεγονὸς ἢ κατὰ προαίρεσιν, δῆλον ὡς οὐδὲν ἂν ἐτι βέβαιον οὐδ’ ἀσφαλὲς γένοιτο τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ τοιοῦτου συγγραφέως λεγομένων, ‘When we find one or two false statements in a book and they prove to be deliberate ones, it is evident that not a word written by such an author is any longer certain and reliable’ (in Paton’s translation).

⁵⁹ Georgii Henrici Ursini *Observationum Philologicarum Liber Unus ... Adjecta est ad calcem libri Oratio de Ilio capto, adversus Dionis illam de Ilio non capto, quae inscribitur Τρωικός*, Ratisponae 1679, p. 241–273. The work is available in the digital collection of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (cf. n. 54).

⁶⁰ *Homerum a Dione Chrysostomo ... dissertatione publica vindicabit, praeside M. Godofredo Kirbach ... respondens Christianus Krayerus*, typis M. Henckelii, 1687. A digitization of this work is available online on the Göttinger Digitalisierungszentrum website (<http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/>). As far as I can reconstruct, this figure is otherwise unknown.

quitatis consensus Ursin opposes Dio's attempt to refute Homer, which he characterizes as a *calidum facinus, sed parum callidum*. Dio's arguments are *ratiunculae ... veri speciem mentientes, sed quibus si excutias nihili subsit, sola quippe straminea nescio cuius Aegyptii Sacerdotis fide subnixae*.⁶¹

Ursin reminds his audience of Dio's good reputation by referring to his golden nickname and to Trajan's high esteem of him (also mentioned by Rupert and Kraye). He feels the urgency to refute his arguments particularly because of the previous positive reception of the speech. In this context he refers to the translation with notes that had ensured its circulation, namely Lorenz Rhodomann's Latin version, printed in Rostock in 1585, and to the heated defense of Dio's oration that had more recently been carried out by Rupert (p. 243). The two main reasons that prompted Ursin's passionate response are outlined in the following paragraph:

Exarsi fateor hanc ueritati ab iis, quibus nihil minus conueniebat, uim intentari, totque grauissimorum tanto tempore priorum Historicorum, imo totius antiquitatis fidem, unius Rhetoris, incerto tibicine fulti, causa in dubium uocari; eoque magis exarsi, quo minus ipsum Historiae Graecanae fontem, a quo, Varrone teste, omnis certa ac firma Graecarum rerum ad nos cognitio defluxit, hoc nobis turbare facinore ferendum uidebatur.

Admittedly I was inflamed by the fact that those for whom it was most inappropriate applied such violence to the truth and called into question the reliability of so many authoritative and much older Historians – indeed the reliability of the entire antiquity! – for the sake of a single Rhetorician propped up by a weak pillar. And I was the more inflamed the less bearable it seemed that this bravery muddled the very source of Greek History, from which – as Varro attests – all certain knowledge of Greek antiquity came down to us.

Ursin's explicit aim is to defend the best of poets, Homer, and to confirm the trustworthiness of the Greek historical tradition

⁶¹ 'Little arguments which simulate the appearance of the truth, but lack substance, if you investigate them, and are in fact only supported by the straw testimony of a certain Egyptian priest' (p. 242).

against Dio's subversive project.⁶² Although the outcome of his analysis is clear from the beginning, the author characterizes his discourse as a trial, whose purpose is to investigate the truth and, among other things, to weigh the *auctoritas* of the testimonies adduced in support of either side:

Ad indagandum igitur rei gestae, quae in controuersiam et disceptationem uenit, ueritatem, utra pars, illane quae negat, an quae adfirmat, ueriora dixerit, cum tota res testibus, tamquam in iudicio, sit peragenda, uidendum omnino, qui, et quot, et quantae auctoritatis ab utraque parte reperiantur (p. 245).

Thus, in order to investigate the truth of the subject under debate and discern who told a more accurate story, whether the part that denies or the one that confirms, since the whole question must be decided through witnesses, as in a trial, we need to figure out which witnesses, how many, and how authoritative are found on either side.

A crucial part of the 'trial' that follows is devoted to the deconstruction of the witness adduced by Dio, the Egyptian priest. Ursin argues for his non-historicity and sarcastically disintegrates his identity: his home is Thebes, *quae tum nullae amplius exstabant*, his name is *idem quod Ulyssi Homérico, utis*, and the time and place of his encounter with Dio are the Greek calends and Utopia respectively (p. 266). In considering the priest a mere literary construction, Ursin identifies an important part of Dio's *inuentio*. However, the consequences he draws from this aspect go beyond the literary analysis. Rather, the priest contributes to the characterization of Dio's speech as a *mendaciorum aedificium*:

In hac sententia totus adhuc persisto, ex igenio Dionem suomet pilas et monumenta haecce Aegyptiaca struxisse, eaque ruituro alias mendaciorum suorum aedificio pro fundamento substruxisse; ipsum vero Sacerdotem Aegyptium ad exemplar Platonici istius, in Timaeo Graecos arroganter exsibilantis, affinxisse (p. 269–270).

I still remain entirely of this opinion, that Dio built the columns and these Egyptian memorials out of his own imagina-

⁶² 'ut ... uindicarem a mendacio maximum Poetarum Homerum, et labantem tot Historicorum fulcirem fidem, et denique dolos ac machinas, quibus ad subuertendam ueritatem usus est Dio, ab ea depellerem' (p. 243).

tion, and used them as the foundation of his lies, otherwise destined to collapse; he indeed invented even the Egyptian priest on the model of the Platonic priest who arrogantly hisses the Greeks in the *Timaeus*.

The final paragraph is rather expected:

Stet parta Graecis decem annorum sudore gloria, stet Homero fides in hoc sua, stet omnium quotquot unquam fuerunt Historicorum concordia; neque unius Rhetoris aetate tanto posterioris, quem sive Iliensium, ad quos habita oratio, sive ipsius potius Imperatoris Trajani gratiae id dederit, ipsum non sic, ut scripsit, sensisse existimo, myrotheis et calamistris veritatem adeo corrumpi nobis patiamur (p. 273).

Let the glory procured to the Greeks by the sweat of ten years remain, let Homer's reliability on this topic remain, let the unanimity of all Historians of all times remain; and let us not allow the truth to be corrupted to such an extent by the artificial ornaments of one Rhetorician of such a later period. Whether he did this to please the Trojans to whom he addressed the speech, or rather Emperor Trajan himself, I do not think he really believed what he wrote.

A similar interplay of authorities also underlies Kraye's work. At the beginning of his dissertation, he declares that he is aware that he is writing about, and against, a deeply appreciated author. Accordingly, he outlines Dio's literary skills and reputation in highly praising tones:

Quem cum Prusias, Regum in Bithynia quondam sedes, in lucem editum excepisset, fouisset et ad firmandam aetatem perduxisset, humanitatis atque doctrinae studium uulgo exemit, ingenique flumen dulcissimum ac incredibilis dicendi uis et copia aureo nomine posteritatis memoriae consecrauit (§ 1).

After Prusias, once the abode of Kings in Bithynia, received him as he was born, cherished and guided him to maturity, his zealous application to liberal education and erudition made him stand out from the crowd, and the sweetest stream of his intelligence and the incredible force and abundance of his eloquence consecrated him to the memory of future generations with a golden name.

The merits of the *Trojan Oration* are then highlighted. Kraye mentions both the *genus argumenti* and the *artis excellentia* (§ 2).

Furthermore, the deep appreciation shown by renowned scholars such as Rhodomann, the author of the first annotated translation, and the erudite Casaubon, whose expertise in every literary genre Kraye considers exceptional, makes the *Trojan Oration* even more worthy of attention in his eyes. It is precisely a suggestion in Casaubon's comment on the oration that made him willing to undertake the task of refuting Dio:

Cautior hac in parte Casaubonus [...] hoc illam elogio ornat: 'Dignus plane liber hic quem legant Philologi et quicumque in ueterum scriptis cum iudicio cupiunt uersari. Quamquam et pro Homero multa dici possunt, si quis uatem summum fecerit tanti, ut in eius gratiam uelit Dioni ὁμόσε χωρεῖν' (§ 2).

More cautious in this respect, Casaubon [...] praises the oration as follows: 'This book is absolutely worth a read by philologists and whoever wishes to sensibly occupy themselves with ancient works. Nevertheless, many things may be said in defence of Homer, if one thinks so high of the best poet to be willing to take the field against Dio for his sake'.

Kraye is aware of the audacity of his task:

Audacissimus igitur ego ex omnibus? Aut tanto instructor ab ingenio ad refringendas eloquentissimi Dionis opes? Aut eorum forsitan e numero, quibus alios confutare tamquam animi pabulum? (§ 2).

Am I then the most audacious of all? Or so much more prepared, by natural disposition, to refute Dio's powerful eloquence? Or perhaps am I one of those to whom confuting others is like nourishment for the soul?

Awe for authority – that of Dio, a widely appreciated author, and that of the modern scholars who devoted attention to him – can be read between the lines already in these first paragraphs. The whole pamphlet leaves us with the impression that Homer's authority is defended essentially on the grounds of other authorities or, more generally, on the grounds of the centrality of Homer in Greek education and culture. Kraye refers to Pliny, Alexander the Great, Augustus, Plato and Aristotle, all differently but unanimously bearing witness to the high consideration of Homer in the Graeco-Roman world:

Pueros in scholis ab hoc uatum principe auspicatos esse prudens autor Plinius commemorat [...]. Illa belli fulmina, Magnus Philippi filius et primus imperii Romani conditor ut inuictae uirtutis aemulatione sic ingenua Homeri aestimatione uelut inter se contenderunt, uterque semper secum habuit, neuter e manibus nisi perraro deposuit. Plato θεῖος, Aristoteles θαυμάσιος, ut ueteribus saluantur, hunc saepenumero tamquam rerum suarum testem laudare non uerentur (§ 3).

Plinius, an intelligent author, relates that children in school began with this most illustrious of poets [...]. Those famous military thunderbolts, (Alexander) the Great, son of Philip, and the first founder of the Roman Empire, competed against each other, so to say, not only in unbeaten military value but also in a sincere admiration of Homer. They both had his poems with themselves all the time, and only rarely placed them aside. Plato ‘the divine’ and Aristotle ‘the marvelous’, as the ancients used to call them, do not hesitate to quote him very often as a witness in support of their arguments.

Even more explicitly, Kraye invokes the *seculorum consensus* and the *peruulgata fama* in support of Homer and emphasizes the opposition of a crowd of *antiquissimi et luculentissimi Scriptores, Philosophi, Oratores, Poetae*, endowed with *iudicium* and literary expertise, to a single man, *tanto temporis exacto spatio et uel mille annis retrolapsis natus* (§ 7). This is precisely the reaction Dio expects from his audience, and the approach he criticizes.

Accordingly, Kraye tries to demolish Dio’s account by putting into question his reliability. First of all, he underlines how his *autoritas*, *sanctitas* and *fides* are not enough established to discourage criticism:

Non est autoritate tam grauis hic testis, religione adeo sanctus, fide ita cognitus atque perspectus ut eius uultum sustinere recusemus et productum testimonium tamquam firmissimum ἀβασανιστως admittamus (§ 15).

This witness is not so weighted with authority, so inviolable in his sacredness, so renowned and well-known for his reliability that we refuse to stare back at him and admit the produced testimony as most trusted without due examination.

Secondly, he focuses on Dio’s vagueness about the Egyptian priest and the circumstances of their encounter, with arguments and conclusions remindful of Ursin:

Iam si res caret suspicione nec ulla ex parte laborat eius fides, cur hominem sine nomine nobis obtrudit? [...] Dic tempus et locum, quo et quando tibi hoc arcanum aperuit? Doceas ad minimum, quod arcem rei concernit, qua urbe, quo templo pilae monstrentur [...]. Olet opinor fraudem, clamat calliditatem, totumque ab imis unguibus ad uerticem usque summum ex fallaciis et mendaciis constat Aegyptiacum illud μορμολυκεῖον (§ 15).

Now if the thing is free from suspicion and its credibility has no weak points, why does he thrust on us a man with no name? [...] Tell us: when and where did he reveal this secret to you? Explain at least (and this regards the core of the question) in which city, in which temple the columns are shown [...]. I think that Egyptian bogey smells of fraud, screams cunning, and is all made of deceits and lies from top to toe.

The conclusion is drastic: Kraye reduces the new version to a sophistic fraud, and seals the disintegration of the priest's authority by labeling him as a μορμολυκεῖον.⁶³

5. Conclusions

Dio's project is not simply to dismantle Homer's authority, but to question the ways in which this authority was constructed, accepted, perpetuated. Dio offers an alternative. Not simply a different, more plausible version of the facts, but, more importantly, an example of how the historical truth should be ascertained. Dio exposes the deceit on which Homer's authority is based by turning against it the same elements that had contributed to its establishment, and by questioning the ingredients of his reputation on intellectual grounds. Among the most relevant aspects of this project is the assumption that Homer knew the true version of the Trojan war but misrepresented it to his advantage. Homer's story is a fraud. Its success is due to audiences' intellectual laziness and to the supine transmission of unverified δόξαι over the centuries.

⁶³ Erasmus in his *Adagia* explains the word as *persona laruae aut malo genio similis, qua pueros territant quidam*, and as *terriculamenta*, empty notions or bugbears. So Dempsey 2001, p. 102–103.

On the other hand, Dio presents himself as the holder and messenger of the true version, and stands out from the crowd that has accepted the false account as a questioning mind, one that draws on reliable sources and verifies them on the grounds of rational considerations.

Contrary to Dio's method, in the episodes of his reception we have analyzed, the acceptance of Homer's or Dio's version is based more on the authority of either source than on rational considerations on their accounts of the war. Tzetzes accepts Homer's authority aprioristically, and this acceptance, an essential part of his literary and exegetical project, leads him to bluntly refuse Dio's authority. Rupert accepts Dio's version against Homer's mainly because it is supported by Egyptian sources, whose reliability is commended by several authors. Ursin and Kraye, on the contrary, rehabilitate Homer's authority on the grounds of the general consensus and by questioning the historicity of the new source adduced by Dio. Rupert, Ursin, and Kraye base their conclusions on the authority or lack of authority of others; Tzetzes grounds his argument in the authority of Homer and ultimately, with typical self-satisfaction, in his own.

In all the texts examined, authority is at stake. Questioned, defended, constructed, deconstructed, it appears a crucial element for the evaluation not simply of Homer's poems, but of the long-lasting heroic tradition they preserve. A tradition that permeated the cultural debate both in the Greek world and, much later, in modern Europe, at the dawn of that big, multifaceted, and somewhat unresolved controversy known as the Homeric question.⁶⁴

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⁶⁴ For the role of the *Trojan Oration* in the Homeric question see Swain 2000, p. 19.

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Abstract

In the *Trojan Oration* Dio Chrysostom questions the authority of Homer as singer of the Trojan war and criticizes the ways in which it was born and nourished over the centuries. Dio proposes a new approach to the reconstruction of the truth about the war and presents a new version of the facts. By framing his arguments in a gen-

eral reflection about knowledge and opinion, truth and deceit, and by combining the use of a new source with a reasoned examination of the two accounts, he shows that the main concern of this oration are the ways in which historical and literary authority is established and perpetuated. Selected chapters of the *Nachleben* of the speech – namely the brief and violent attack of Dio by Joannes Tzetzes in the twelfth century and the lengthier discussions by Rupert, Ursin, and Kraye in the seventeenth century – show how Byzantine and modern readers of the oration used Dio's and Homer's authority in support of either version of the Trojan war.

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‘BUT I MAY BE WRONG’:
THE SELF-CONSCIOUS
CONSTRUCTION OF EPISCOPAL
AUTHORITY IN THE SERMONS
OF AMBROSE OF MILAN

1. *Ambrose of Milan as popular preacher*

That Ambrose of Milan was and is an authority is undoubted. Today he is one of the four traditional doctors of the Latin church, along with Jerome, Augustine of Hippo and Gregory the Great, and his particular authority and influence is attested to even by the other three. Hence Gregory has been said to owe ‘much of his intellectual vocabulary to Cassian, Augustine and Ambrose’.¹ Augustine in turn acknowledged the important part played by Ambrose in his life and works: as the compelling figure presiding over the Milan of the 380s in Augustine’s account in the *Confessiones* of his own experience of Christian conversion and baptism; as an exemplar of the Christian preacher in the final book of *De doctrina Christiana*; and as an authoritative interpreter of Scripture in, for example, his treatise *De uidentio Dei*.² Jerome was (not untypically) more inclined to dissent, at least in regard to the originality and intellectual rigour of Ambrose’s preaching.³

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¹ Straw 1988, p. 13.

² Augustine, *Conf.* 5.14.24, 6.3.3–4.6, 9.6.14–16.16; *De doct. Christ.* 4.21.46; *De uid. Dei* [= *Ep.* 147] 17–39, 52–53.

³ For a good account of a range of criticisms made by Jerome, and for a possible response from Ambrose, see Hunter 2009. Modern scholars have equally

Yet even Jerome was willing to allow that Ambrose played an important role in the public and political life of the Christian church in the later Roman empire, and in guaranteeing the prominence and influence of institutional Christianity in the West.⁴

Modern scholars have for the most part been equally positive in their assessment of Ambrose and of his contribution not only to Christian tradition but to the shaping of modern Western society. In one direction there has been a wealth of scholarship on Ambrose's philosophical and theological interests and commitments, which has done much to secure his intellectual reputation.⁵ No less prominently, a number of scholars have chosen to emphasise the role of Ambrose as a former imperial functionary who continued to involve himself in affairs of state and court, and whose position as the bishop of Milan allowed him to establish a lasting set of relationships between the Roman emperor and the institutional church.⁶ Thus the image of Ambrose as doctor of the church, with an authority founded on his writings, has come to be supplemented by an understanding that much of his authority in his own time – and therefore at least some of his subsequent reputation – was owed to his excellence as an operator among the corridors of imperial power.⁷

Yet these two approaches to Ambrose, which focus respectively on his authority among an academic and philosophi-

found some of Ambrose's interpretations (especially in his *De fide*) to be unconvincing, although often because other aims were in view: see e.g. Hanson 1988, p. 669; Humphries 2010, p. 49–53.

⁴ This was the basis of Rufinus' response to Jerome's criticisms at *Apol. c. Hier.* 2.25; Jerome himself seems to acknowledge (at *Chron.* s.a. 374) Ambrose's role in guaranteeing Christian orthodoxy in Italy.

⁵ A list of major works in this area published in the last 50 years or so would include Paredi 1960, Dassmann 1965, Madec 1974, Savon 1977, Marksches 1995 and Moorhead 1999; there have also been numerous shorter contributions by Yves-Marie Duval, Jacques Fontaine and others.

⁶ Modern studies focusing on Ambrose as a church politician include Campenhausen 1929, Homes Dudden 1935, McLynn 1994, Williams 1995 and Liebeschuetz 2011.

⁷ Indeed, the latter image has been so firmly established that Williams 1995, p. 127 expresses the concern that Ambrose might come to be viewed unfairly as a figure 'whose administrative and legal abilities far outweighed his grasp of theological and ecclesiastical matters'.

cal elite and on his influence in the high politics of the empire and the church, risk overlooking the immediate context within which Ambrose established and maintained his authority as bishop of Milan. Certainly much has been done to recreate the social and topographical character of the city of Milan in the time of Ambrose.⁸ Yet the relationship between Ambrose as bishop and the more ordinary people of Milan has proved elusive. These were the initial audience for the sermons on which almost all of his surviving writings were based, and they constituted the public before whom he made a show of his political *savoir-faire*. It was in the course of his regular interactions with this audience that Ambrose found the opportunity both to construct his intellectual programme and to conduct his public and political life. To a large extent, it was this relationship which was the most obvious foundation of any bishop's authority, and it was one that had to be very carefully managed and maintained.⁹

In particular, it has proven difficult to gain any reliable access to what must have been the most frequent and fundamental point of engagement between Ambrose and the people of Milan: the weekly public sermon in the city's basilica.¹⁰ Not that Ambrose's sermons and treatises have been ignored. Where they are explicitly doctrinal or didactic in their concerns, they have been examined for traces of Ambrose's own beliefs and practices and elucidated as texts devoted to producing a particular kind of rhetorical effect on a particular audience.¹¹ Such openly doctrinal and didactic works, however, are relatively rare among Ambrose's surviving writings. In his own day they will have been dwarfed, at least in terms of sheer weight of words, by the sermons he delivered on a weekly basis to his congregation

⁸ Works focused on Ambrose's Milan or on ecclesiastical northern Italy include Cattaneo 1975, Krautheimer 1983, Humphries 1999 and numerous important contributions by Lellia Cracco Ruggini and Rita Lizzi Testa.

⁹ Thus Chadwick 1980, p. 5: 'the bishop's power-base, so to speak, lay always in the allegiance of his flock to the ministry of word and sacrament and personal care of which he is the focus'; see also Brown 1992, p. 71–117; Satterlee 2002, p. 67.

¹⁰ McLynn 1994, p. 237.

¹¹ Examples making use of Ambrose's didactic works include Vasey 1982, Harmless 1995 and Colish 2005; Williams 1995 seeks to reconstruct Ambrose's congregation primarily on the basis of his doctrinal polemics.

in Milan. These in turn are likely to have focused above all on the interpretation and explication of Scripture; and it is notable that the surviving sermons and treatises in this style have so far attracted less attention. This is not to underrate the importance of the scholarship that has indeed been carried out on these exegetical sermons: illuminating work has been done in particular in establishing Ambrose's method and principles of interpretation.¹² All the same, once the intellectual content of the treatises is set aside there has seemed to many scholars to be little worth examining. The original context and rhetoric of the sermons as delivered to a Milanese audience has seemed rather difficult to recapture. Indeed, insofar as they have been considered as rhetorical performances, Ambrose's sermons have tended to be harshly judged.

Hence many scholars have noted the apparent inconsistency between Ambrose's elevated reputation as an orator in his own day and the seemingly mediocre style of the sermons as they have been handed down to us. There is, after all, no doubt that Ambrose was believed by his contemporaries to be a conspicuously effective preacher. This is directly attested by Augustine of Hippo, who records in his *Confessiones* that on his arrival in Milan as a professional orator he took the opportunity to visit the basilica and hear Ambrose speak, to test for himself the bishop's reputation for eloquence.¹³ Nor was Augustine disappointed: he insists that he was first of all captivated by the style, and only then by the content of Ambrose's preaching. Even if Augustine at this time of his life was perhaps an unusually receptive listener, he was surely still an adequate judge of oratorical technique. As a public speaker we can be sure that Ambrose was by no means inept, and Augustine gives us no grounds for imagining him to have been even second-rate.

Nevertheless, Augustine's enthusiastic report has been met with surprise and scepticism by a number of modern scholars. Even the most sensitive and positive of readers are ready to admit that Ambrose's sermons seem to lack 'la chaleur humaine, le sens

¹² Savon 1977, Pizzolato 1978, Graumann 1994; see also the discussion in Moorhead 1999, p. 71–101.

¹³ Augustine, *Conf.* 5.14.24.

de contact avec l'auditoire' which is so widely appreciated in the sermons of contemporaries such as John Chrysostom and Augustine himself.¹⁴ His exegetical sermons in particular are presented as being 'sans concessions à la facilité, souvent denses, elliptiques, nourris de digressions déroutantes'; and more prosaically put, they have been felt to drag on or 'peter out', while Ambrose's exegesis itself has been judged 'abstract and bloodless'.¹⁵ All of this amounts to a modern image of Ambrose's sermons as rather less engaging and inspiring than might be imagined from Augustine's report. The general view can be summed up in the statement, by a scholar sympathetic to Ambrose, that his sermons lack 'the conversational style, precise language, originality of thought, or dramatic presence that we might well expect of a great preacher'; so that '[r]eading Ambrose's sermons today, we cannot but feel disappointed'.¹⁶

This widespread sense of disappointment has led a number of scholars to conclude that this negative impression, and especially the striking contrast between the sermons of Ambrose and those of Augustine and Chrysostom, can be explained by the nature of the texts as they now survive: that is, in the form of treatises which were undoubtedly edited, compiled, and perhaps substantially rewritten for wider circulation. The idea that this process was enough to erase many of the signs of their original oral delivery was encouraged in the 1950s by the observation that two of Ambrose's didactic works on the sacraments might be read as a sort of 'before-and-after' image. Ambrose's *De sacramentis* seems to have been preserved in the form of a stenographic transcript, much as were many of the sermons of his contemporaries; and by means of a comparison of this work with his more developed treatise on the same theme, the *De mysteriis*, it has been thought possible to reconstruct a more authentic and engaging oral style for Ambrose, characterised by short sentences and

¹⁴ Nauroy 2003b, p. 257. Note that the fundamental contributions of Gérard Nauroy to the study of Ambrose's sermons have been collected and lightly revised in Nauroy 2003a; references will therefore be to that volume.

¹⁵ Nauroy 2003b, p. 257; Moorhead 1999, p. 71, n. 1, p. 97. See also the remarks of other scholars presented at McLynn 1994, p. 245, n. 98.

¹⁶ Satterlee 2002, p. 90, following Nauroy; see also the remarks recorded at McLynn 1994, p. 245, n. 98.

frequent rhetorical questions.¹⁷ Indeed, from a thorough analysis of these works and of Ambrose's corpus of sermons in general it has proved possible to offer some provisional conclusions regarding the more conspicuous features of Ambrose's style across his various homiletic writings.¹⁸ It is clear that Ambrose was capable of being a more direct and appealing orator than the surviving treatises for the most part suggest.

Yet it is not safe to conclude that Ambrose's weekly sermons to the congregation in the main basilica in Milan would have shared the style of these more informal sets of instructions on the sacraments and the creed. These will, after all, have been delivered in a more intimate context, and to an audience of newly-baptised Christians at a more advanced stage of their spiritual development, than would have been the case for those sermons aimed at the wider congregation.¹⁹ As a professional orator, Ambrose will certainly have been trained to adapt his style to the needs of his immediate audience as well as to his particular purpose, and it must be supposed that not all of his treatises were delivered or rewritten in the same way.²⁰ It is dangerous to suppose, therefore, that Ambrose had only one oral style, and that the complexity of his exegetical treatises is purely the result of their written revision. Instead of imagining that these treatises have been wholly rewritten from lost original sermons given in his most informal style, we should ask instead whether the form and

¹⁷ See esp. Mohrmann 1952, 1976; Lazzati 1955; Oberhelman 1991a, p. 43–44, 101–109; Botte 1994 is an edition of the relevant texts (including another evidently stenographic work, Ambrose's *Explanatio symboli*) with a French translation. For more recent commentary on the value of this comparison, see the discussions in Satterlee 2002 and Nauroy 2003e.

¹⁸ Oberhelman 1991a, p. 55; for discussions of this process in individual works, see the detailed discussions in Nauroy 2003c and 2003d.

¹⁹ McLynn 1994, p. 238, n. 67; see also Satterlee 2002, p. 127: 'catechetical preaching requires both a higher degree of intimate contact between the preacher and the listener and a clearer and simpler form than do sermons preached to the community of the faithful'.

²⁰ Cf. Oberhelman 1991a, p. 59–60, who sees prose rhythms as entirely foreign to Ambrose's oral style and their presence in the final text as an index of its revision; but notes that the tendency he observes for Ambrose's early exegetical sermons to display accentual and not quantitative rhythms even in their written form suggests at least a desire to achieve varying effects, and that these sermons should not be supposed to have undergone the same process as can perhaps be traced in the *De mysteriis*.

style of the treatises as we have them might reflect a rhetorical approach which was better suited to the context of an exegetical sermon before a broad congregation. Ambrose's rhetorical style in these sermons, that is, may have made good sense in the original circumstances of their delivery. Rather than suppose that his exegetical treatises remain irretrievably disconnected from their original purpose and context, we may ask whether they might in fact tell us something about the pressures on Ambrose's preaching, and the manner in which he negotiated them.

Thus it is the aim of this essay to propose that Ambrose's exegetical sermons as they now survive – in written form, and most likely revised – may nevertheless reflect more closely than is usually imagined the style and rhetoric of the sermons as they were originally delivered. The peculiarities of these sermons, and especially their oblique and indirect style, are identified here not as the result of the revision of a sermon (or set of sermons) into a treatise, but as having been present in the original performance. Nor is this meant to suggest that Ambrose was a mediocre orator. On the contrary, the style of these exegetical sermons is explained as part of a deliberate rhetorical strategy aimed at creating and maintaining a particular kind of relationship between preacher and audience. Ambrose made use of a sort of irresolute exegesis and a multiplication of possible meanings as a means of demonstrating and reaffirming his episcopal authority before his Milanese audience.

2. *Character and context of the early exegetical works*

In order to establish this point, it makes most sense to focus on those works which seem to have their origins in the regular weekly sermon, and which also appear to have undergone the least adaptation in their written form. This means steering away from those sermons which, although originating in the exegesis of Scripture, appear to have been substantially revised to make a more elaborate philosophical point: works such as the treatises *De Iacob et uita beata* or *De Isaac et anima*.²¹ It will also

²¹ These receive substantial discussion in Nauroy 2003c and 2003d respectively.

be useful if we are able to reconstruct the context of the original sermons, at least in terms of a broad period within which they may have been delivered. With all this in mind, the best candidates would seem to be the exegetical treatises which provide rather unsystematic commentary on elements of the book of Genesis, and which are datable to the first years of Ambrose's episcopate. From these works – on paradise, on Cain and Abel, and on Noah – it seems most convenient given the shortage of space to focus here on the earliest and most securely dated: *De paradiso*.²² Before embarking on that discussion in detail, however, it will be necessary first to outline the character and context of these early exegetical sermons.

Certainly there is enough in the style of Ambrose's early exegetical sermons to distinguish them from his other works, and to allow the supposition that they reveal something of the conditions of their original delivery. Neither as plain as the stenographed catechetical works nor as highly polished as Ambrose's formal oratory in his funeral orations, or in other works anticipating an imperial audience, they are distinct too from the superficially similar works in which biblical figures are yoked to indictments of contemporary evils (*De Nabuthae*, *De Tobia*) or employed as encouragement towards a moral and philosophical outlook (*De Iacob et uita beata*, *De Isaac et anima*).²³ Indeed, they very much exemplify the tendencies which have made Ambrose's sermons so unappealing to modern readers: for whereas the more philosophical treatises are complex and allusive, but may yield a profound spiritual message if read sympathetically; and whereas the more moralistic harangues are comparatively direct and accessible, these early sermons offer none of these concessions.²⁴ Moreover, unlike the fuller commentaries on Luke and the Psalms, or the *Hexaemeron*, they are not even methodical in their explications of the scriptural text. Instead they present us with an Ambrose who is 'more concerned with plumbing

²² For its early date see Ambrose, *Ep.* 34[45].1; precise estimates range from 375 to 378.

²³ A good sense of the range is given in Oberhelman 1991a, p. 24–60.

²⁴ Nauroy 2003c, 2003d, and 2010; cf. also his characterisation of the larger-scale exegetical treatises at 2003c, p. 315. On the *De Nabuthae* and similar works, see in particular Vasey 1982; cf. McLynn 1994, p. 245, n. 98.

the depth of meaning of a text than with providing a unifying theme or systematic approach'.²⁵ It is these early exegetical sermons in particular which confirm the reputation of Ambrose's preaching as 'dense and elliptical'.²⁶

If we are to accept, then, that the allusive and unsystematic style of these sermons reflects an original oral performance of the material in something like its present form, and that it was intended to have a very particular rhetorical purpose and effect, we must begin by asking what kind of audience is envisaged for Ambrose's sermons. The rather complex character of Ambrose's preaching in particular might lead us to conclude along with Ramsey MacMullen that the audience for late-antique sermons, or at least for those delivered by civic bishops in the most important cities of the empire, was made up predominantly of an intellectual and social elite.²⁷ Yet MacMullen's view has been firmly disputed in virtually all of the literature since, and evidence has been put forward that audiences even for the most cosmopolitan preachers are likely to have included a much wider cross-section of society, including women and the (relatively) poor.²⁸ In the case of Ambrose in particular, we are at least aware that his audience included Augustine, a provincial blow-in of rather insecure social status. And although space was no doubt limited at Ambrose's weekly sermon in the basilica, more ordinary Christians such as Augustine's mother Monica – who educationally at least is scarcely to be counted among the elite – are unlikely to have been consistently excluded.²⁹

²⁵ Satterlee 2002, p. 102.

²⁶ McLynn 1994, p. 237; cf. Nauroy 2003b, p. 247: 'L'extrême densité des citations, allusions et réminiscences scripturaires dans le tissu de la prose d'Ambroise a frappé tous ses lecteurs'.

²⁷ MacMullen 1989.

²⁸ Rousseau 1998, Cunningham & Allen 1998, and especially Mayer 2000. For a good recent summary of the issues, see Maxwell 2006, p. 65–67.

²⁹ Her devotion is recorded in Augustine, *Conf.* 6.1.1, which suggests that she attended Ambrose's sermons specifically: 'et studiosus ad ecclesiam currere et in Ambrosi ora suspendi'. Given the limited capacity of the basilica (around 3000, of a total population of over 100,000), it is clear that only a fraction of the Christian population will have attended mass with Ambrose; but there is nothing to suggest that it was the same faces every time, or that Augustine (e.g.) found it difficult to arrange to attend.

Moreover, Ambrose himself seems to have supposed that he and other bishops would be preaching to a varied audience. Giving advice to aspiring preachers in his *De officiis*, he insists that a preacher should cater to as broad a public as possible: he recommends a style neither too prolix nor too abrupt, but clear and simple, with spirit but without affectation.³⁰ To some extent, of course, this is wholly conventional advice for any public speaker, and it need not be supposed to represent a manifesto for Ambrose's own homiletic style. Equally, it is easy to imagine that Ambrose's recommendations are violated by his exegetical treatises and exemplified, on the contrary, by his stenographed works such as the *De sacramentis*. Yet it must be recognised that what counts as complexity for a modern audience might not have been regarded as such in the ancient world. Certainly *De sacramentis* itself, written in what seems to have been Ambrose's most accessible style, is not without a complexity of its own, in the form of 'colorful stylistic turns like parallelism, word-play, assonance, and figurative language'.³¹ These rhetorical effects are very different from the 'formal rhetorical ornaments' which mark out more scholastic compositions directed towards the emperor and court; but it should be noted that these are largely absent too from Ambrose's exegetical sermons, even if they are less direct than the *De sacramentis*, and that their complexity was not incompatible with the inclusion of similarly 'popular elements of style [...] designed to please a church audience'.³² In other words, those elements of Ambrose's preaching which modern scholars find off-putting may well have been precisely those elements which for a contemporary audience made them more accessible than the towering heights of formal public oratory. In addition, it must be remembered that ancient audiences were more accustomed to public oratory than is usually true in the modern world, and will have possessed a greater capacity than ourselves to absorb information from its presentation in oral

³⁰ Ambrose, *De off.* 1.22.101: 'neque nimium prolixus neque cito interruptus neque uel fastidium derelinquat uel desidium prodat atque incuriam; oratio pura, simplex, dilucida atque manifesta, plena grauitatis et ponderis, non adfectata elegancia sed non intermissa gratia'. For discussion see Graumann 1997.

³¹ Oberhelman 1991a, p. 60.

³² Oberhelman 1991a, p. 125.

rather than written form. Christian audiences in particular are likely to have possessed a deep familiarity with the scriptures as spoken texts.³³ We should therefore be cautious in our judgements of what aspects of a sermon even a non-elite audience will have found accessible.³⁴

It is in any case not to be assumed that a general audience will have been unable to tolerate a certain amount of complexity, or that there will have been nothing in Ambrose's exegetical sermons which appealed even to the 'uneducated'.³⁵ At the same time, it is widely agreed that to follow all of Ambrose's arguments and interpretations in detail would have required exceptionally close attention on the part of his listeners.³⁶ With this in mind, some scholars have proposed that his sermons were intended to be understood on multiple different levels. Thus in her study of the 'ethical' sermons which Ambrose derived from the stories of the Old Testament patriarchs, Marcia Colish identifies an 'ethics for the common man' but finds that it sits awkwardly with the impression that, to be fully understood, these sermons seem simultaneously to demand an audience which was 'well educated [...], literate in Greek as well as Latin, familiar with the literary classics in both languages, and familiar as well with Roman law and classical ethics'.³⁷ This apparent disjunction has been understood to lie behind Ambrose's own comment in his *De Isaac et anima* that an author must adapt his text to the intellectual capacities and limitations of its audience.³⁸ Indeed, it is notable that this remark comes in one of his most difficult philosophical works; and Gérard Nauroy has made use of it to argue that in this work in particular, and others like it, Ambrose was seeking to construct a single text that could be

³³ For consideration of this point see now Harrison 2013.

³⁴ Maxwell 2006, p. 67.

³⁵ Thus Oberhelman 1991a, p. 216 supposes an audience 'mostly comprised of the uneducated'.

³⁶ Nauroy 2003b, p. 258: 'il faut admettre que la plupart de ses exégèses exigeaient une qualité d'écoute exceptionnelle de la part de la *plebs christiana*'; this latter point is repeated in Satterlee 2002, p. 99.

³⁷ Colish 2005, p. 17.

³⁸ Ambrose, *De Isaac* 7.57; for the (reasonable) inference that this implies a varied audience for his sermons and treatises, see Fitzgerald 2002, p. 79–81; Graumann 1997; Oberhelman 1991a, p. 55; Satterlee 2002, p. 118.

appreciated on multiple levels of meaning.³⁹ To simplify a little, this is to suggest that he included here and elsewhere a certain amount of superficial dazzle – and some easy, literal interpretations of Scripture – for the sake of those who were still at an early stage in their acculturation into and study of Christianity; while for the more advanced, he offered a path to a more profound initiation into the mysteries of faith.⁴⁰

If this were to be applied to Ambrose's sermons more generally – and we should remember that the exegetical sermons are somewhat different in character from the *De Isaac et anima*, and that the argument is based on the written form of that treatise – it might appear to offer an explanation for some of the more confusing features of Ambrose's exegesis. The density and allusiveness of Ambrose's style in his early exegetical sermons might be understood as a method of appealing to a popular audience by indulging in word-play and other flashy effects, while sneaking past them a set of arguments and interpretations that demanded a more profound engagement and understanding on the part of a more educated minority. It must be admitted, too, that there is something to be said for superficial dazzle. We may point to the example of John Chrysostom preaching in Greek in Constantinople at a service in which the previous reading and homily had been in Gothic – and so presumably to an audience, some of whose Greek was insufficient to understand him.⁴¹ The appeal of such a sermon in an unknown – but high status – language may be illustrated by an anecdote of the extremely learned Edward Pococke, who as a country parson in the seventeenth century found his resolve to preach in the vernacular went unappreciated by at least one humble member of his English parish: asked about his new priest, he praised him as 'a plain and honest man – but Sir, he is no Latiner'.⁴² Indeed, Ambrose himself was

³⁹ Nauroy 2003d, p. 423–428; Nauroy's ideas also form the basis for the presentation of Ambrose as mystagogue in Satterlee 2002.

⁴⁰ Nauroy 2003b, p. 259–260, p. 283; Nauroy 2003d.; Satterlee 2002, p. 115 brings out clearly the hierarchical vision of Christianity this reading implies.

⁴¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. habita postquam presbyter Gothus* [PG 63.501.2–4]; see Mayer 2000, p. 120, and her comment that 'one or the other homily must have been tedious to stand through'.

⁴² Twells 1740, vol. I, p. 22.

accused by Jerome of appealing to this kind of taste: of seeking to impress a naïve audience by making his sermons a show of sophistication.⁴³ On this basis it is certainly possible to imagine, along with Nauroy, that Ambrose's sermons were often an elegant balancing act, combining an esoteric appeal to the sophisticated with a little bit of posh for the rest.

There are, however, elements of this picture which remain unsatisfactory. For one thing, even if Nauroy's virtuosic unravelling of the *De Isaac et anima* is accepted, and even if it might be applied to the more philosophical treatises written up by Ambrose from sermons, it is difficult to identify a similar scheme in the earlier exegetical works; and in particular, it is difficult to see them as constituting any sustained programme of 'Christian formation'.⁴⁴ In purely practical terms, moreover, it may be doubted whether it would have been possible to follow a complex programme of initiation at first hearing, even for the most advanced, attentive and cultivated members of the audience at the weekly sermon.⁴⁵ The circumstances of such a large-scale event are unlikely to have been carefully controlled, and it may have been difficult even to be sure of attending on a regular basis. Public sermons seem a far less useful medium for this sort of exercise than the written treatise, which could be read and re-read at one's leisure. For that matter, a mystagogic enterprise such as this would have a more natural affiliation with the kind of baptismal instruction we find in the *De sacramentis*: delivered to a core of initiates who had taken a definite step in affirming their faith, and who were granted a separate audience with Ambrose who could address them as he chose. The fact that in the *De sacramentis* his language is disarmingly straightforward might therefore in itself be a warning against the supposition that Christian formation in Ambrose's Milan took the form of esoteric instruction for the educated few.

We may also doubt whether any bishop would have been willing in his weekly sermons to address only a core of educated

⁴³ Jerome, *Comm. Eph.*, preface; Oberhelman 1991b, p. 393–394; Hunter 2009, p. 177–178.

⁴⁴ McLynn 1994, p. 239, n. 71.

⁴⁵ As is partially conceded by Nauroy 2003d, p. 327–328, and 2003b, p. 220, n. 45.

Christian devotees, disregarding any need to appeal to the rest of the crowd with anything more than meretricious dazzle and flash. Ambrose was undoubtedly keen to inspire a greater interest in and commitment to Christianity among his audience – his call for more candidates for baptism in his sermons on Luke shows both the paucity of applicants and his eagerness for them – and it seems unlikely that he would have wanted to limit the appeal in his sermons to a privileged minority.⁴⁶ Indeed, in an age in which baptism was routinely deferred, Ambrose's audience is likely to have been dominated by catechumens far more than by those who had already undergone baptism or who were making active preparations to do so.⁴⁷ The presence of Augustine – in some sense a Manichean on his arrival in Milan, although from a Christian background and soon to be a catechumen – shows moreover that Ambrose's audience could not be relied upon even to be wholly Christian.⁴⁸ Likewise, the two sceptical *cubicularii* who prompted the writing of Ambrose's treatise *De incarnatione* are good evidence that his audience included 'critics as well as admirers', who would scarcely tolerate listening to a sermon they were not supposed to understand.⁴⁹ Ambrose was not preaching exclusively to the converted, and he will have had to take account of the reality that not all who came to listen would take for granted his authority as bishop and accept without argument his interpretations. In the end, his audience might easily have been as mixed as the city itself.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ambrose, *Exp. Eu. Luc.* 4.76; Satterlee 2002, p. 120.

⁴⁷ Satterlee 2002, p. 120: 'deciding to be baptized was not the norm'; cf. p. 124: 'baptized Christians constituted but a minuscule part of Milanese society'.

⁴⁸ Savon 1984, p. 345–346; noted also by Fitzgerald 2002, p. 81: 'Augustine's experience, although he was a catechumen, would at least confirm that not all those who came to hear Ambrose were baptized Christians'.

⁴⁹ McLynn 1994, p. 149, noting also that evidently Ambrose could on occasion be 'subject to direct pressure in his own church'. For the two *cubicularii*, see Paulinus of Milan, *V. Amb.* 18; cf. Ambrose, *De incarnatione* 1.1–2; a possible pun at 2.13 may support the idea that his questioners were *cubicularii*. Paulinus presents them as mere heretics, and Williams 1995, p. 191, n. 22, identifies them with a rival 'Homoian community at Milan'; but their evident presence in the audience for at least one of Ambrose's sermons shows in any case that he could not always rely on a placid reception.

⁵⁰ Nauroy 2003b, p. 258–259: 'aussi mêlé que l'était le peuple chrétien de Milan'; Fitzgerald 2002, p. 80–81 does not rule out the presence even of pagans and Jews; cf. on this point Mayer 2000, p. 125.

It will therefore not do either to suppose that Ambrose's primary aim in his preaching was to initiate a tiny segment of his audience into the mysteries of faith by means of the application of a complex argument; or to regard the remainder as ordinary Christians who were happy not to grasp what they heard.⁵¹ This is not to rule out the possibility that some members of the audience, like the parishioner of Edward Pococke, will have been content to hear the great man speak incomprehensibly. All the same, it seems reasonable at least to begin from the idea that Ambrose expected the majority of his audience to follow him, and we may therefore attempt to read the *De paradiso* and the other early exegetical sermons with this in mind. It is helpful in this regard that these exegetical sermons, even in their presumably revised form, are not as philosophically complex as the *De Isaac et anima* and other treatises like it. Indeed, rather than in the gradual revelation of a secretly complex structure, their difficulty tends to lie in the absence of any methodical structure whatsoever.⁵² They present, more than the later treatises, what Nauroy called a 'ruminantion' on the scriptures, in which Ambrose is found offering up interpretations of the biblical text 'almost impressionistically, to suggest the range and depth of possible meanings rather than to explicate them systematically'.⁵³ Yet it must be supposed that when Ambrose presented his congregation with sermons which, even if not incomprehensible, nevertheless held out little hope of full comprehension, he did so with some purpose in mind. Our object, then, is to ask what there is in his rhetoric and exegesis that might have suited them to the original context in which they were delivered.

The answer that will be offered here derives in part from Nauroy's further remark that Ambrose's preaching sounded like the Bible: 'non plus par juxtaposition de citations aux styles

⁵¹ As proposed by Nauroy 2003b, p. 260.

⁵² Thus Nauroy 2003b, p. 251: 'Son oeuvre écrite est presque toute issue de sa prédication, et même là où l'on peut soupçonner [...] qu'on lit un texte directement rédigé sans l'étape préalable d'un discours oral, la forme, plus serrée, plus érudite parfois, continue d'imiter les particularités du propos parlé'. For the structures of the later treatises, see the readings in Nauroy 2003c and 2003d, with a more extended reading in Sanders 1996.

⁵³ Nauroy 2003b, p. 247; McLynn 1994, p. 238.

disparates, mais en un discours synthétique, éminemment allusif, mystérieux comme la Parole biblique elle-même'.⁵⁴ Rather than interpreting Scripture into more plain and accessible language, Ambrose instead offered his audience 'una dissertazione erudita': an often forbidding display of scholarship which threatened not to explain the Bible so much as to reproduce it entire.⁵⁵ There is perhaps an obvious authority inherent in this policy of thus presenting and re-presenting the Bible to his audience: it was a rhetorical approach which allowed his own words to blend with the authoritative discourse of Scripture. But we need not agree with Jerome that the purpose was empty ostentation.⁵⁶ Nor was it merely a canny manoeuvre on the part of a bishop who would later admit that at the time of the *De paradiso* he was still learning how to be an exegete.⁵⁷ Instead, and more importantly, we find in the *De paradiso* something we find elsewhere in Ambrose's exegesis: an insistence on the limits of the reliable interpretation of Scripture, and on the extent to which all are equally inadequate in the face of its mysteries. Ambrose, in other words, adopts for himself the role of mediator rather than that of an expert interpreter of Scripture.⁵⁸ Instead of insisting on specific readings, or even on the application of a consistent method, he modelled an attitude to the text, and to the task of interpretation, which demonstrated that even in the absence of answers it could be a rewarding intellectual pursuit. The remainder of this article will thus set out these elements of Ambrose's approach in the *De paradiso*, and, on the premise that the treatise as it survives is not impossibly far removed from its original delivery, will seek to suggest ways in which these exegetical and rhetorical

⁵⁴ Nauroy 2003b, p. 296; this point that Ambrose 'sounded like the Bible' is picked up at McLynn 1994, p. 240 and Satterlee 2002, p. 92; the original passage of Nauroy is translated at Satterlee 2002, p. 245.

⁵⁵ Siniscalco 1984, p. 19.

⁵⁶ The charge is also made by Oberhelman 1991a, p. 110, against Augustine's early sermons, which are described as similarly 'saturated with numerous obscure biblical references which would have escaped the audience's comprehension, but which had as their purpose the ostentatious display of Augustine's biblical learning'.

⁵⁷ Ambrose, *Ep.* 34[45].1; cf. *De officiis* 1.1.3–4: 'docere uos coepi quod ipse non didici'.

⁵⁸ Nauroy 2003b, p. 299.

strategies might have worked to establish and maintain Ambrose's own authority as bishop of Milan.

3. *De paradiso and the multiplication of meaning*

From the very beginning, *De paradiso* is characterised by the deliberate and self-conscious adoption of indeterminacy and ambiguity in scriptural interpretation. Admittedly Ambrose begins with an apparently ingenuous enthusiasm: 'de paradiso adoriendus sermo non mediocrem aestum nobis uidetur incutere quidnam sit paradisu et ubi sit qualis ue sit inuestigare et explicare cupientibus [...]'.⁵⁹ But this eagerness is immediately undercut by the recollection of Paul's heavenly vision in II Corinthians, from which the Apostle returned uncertain (or forbidden to tell) of the details of his experience.⁶⁰ For Ambrose this precedent casts a serious doubt on the whole enterprise:

ergo si huiusmodi paradisu est, ut eum solus Paulus aut uix aliquis Pauli similis, cum in uita degeret, uidere potuerit, idem tamen, siue in corpore siue extra corpus uiderit, meminisse non possit, audierit tamen uerba, quibus prohibitus sit uulgare quod audierat, quo tandem modo nos paradisi situm poterimus absoluere, quem nec uidere potuimus et, si potuissemus uidere, tamen prohiberemur aliis intimare?⁶¹

This seems an extraordinary admission of defeat before the treatise has even got going. Paul, it goes without saying, is to be understood as possessing far greater access to the mysteries of faith than Ambrose or the members of his audience can hope to acquire;

⁵⁹ Ambrose, *Par.* 1.1: 'Setting about the subject of Paradise, I seem struck by no ordinary eagerness to explain what and where it is, and what kind of thing it is, to those wishing to know'. Translations from Latin here and throughout are my own.

⁶⁰ II Cor. 12:1–4.

⁶¹ Ambrose, *Par.* 1.1: 'Thus if Paradise is something of this kind that Paul alone, or someone similar to Paul, while alive was scarcely able to see it, and was nevertheless unable to remember whether he saw it in the body or out of the body, and furthermore heard words but was forbidden to reveal what he heard, how will it be at all possible for us to pronounce upon the place of Paradise which we have neither been able to see, and which, if we had been able to see it, we would be forbidden to reveal to others?'

and yet even having seen Paradise, at least in some sense, he was unable to describe it to others. This amounts to more than a mere *captatio benevolentiae* on Ambrose's part: it makes the task of realising and expounding his topic not only difficult but so unlikely as to be practically impossible. From the very start of his public exegetical career, in other words, Ambrose is engaged in lowering the expectations of his audience regarding the limits of his own and their own capacity to interpret and explain the scriptures. Even the apostle Paul fell necessarily short: as Ambrose makes clear in his later exegesis, true understanding was available only to Christ, and in him and through him: 'scripturae uerus interpres Christus'.⁶²

There remained of course true things to be said, and attempts at interpretation by others that were worth exploring and controverting. In fact, in preference to trying to imitate Paul by gaining direct access to Paradise, Ambrose spends a remarkable amount of his time in *De paradiso* responding to problems raised by the originally Marcionite exegete Apelles. These long-standing and largely obsolete charges were scarcely an urgent matter: Apelles had been writing around two centuries before Ambrose, and had in the meantime been answered by a string of highly authoritative exegetes: among them Philo, Origen, Theophilus of Antioch, and Tertullian.⁶³ The criticisms of both Marcion and Apelles derived from a tendency to offer a literal interpretation of the Old Testament in particular: a tactic which in the circumstances favoured their contention that it was filled with absurdities and thus inappropriately linked to the New Testament.⁶⁴ Ambrose's decision to organise *De paradiso* around these outdated objections had, perhaps, less to do with their continuing relevance than with the advantages offered by the kind of interpretative practice by which they were rebutted. In particular, the tradition of allegorical exegesis associated with Philo and Alexandria allowed an acceptance that the literal reading of Scripture

⁶² Ambrose, *Exp. Ev. Luc.* 7.50; Nauroy 2003b, p. 298–299; for this as the key to Ambrose's exegetical practice, see Graumann 1994.

⁶³ For discussion of the main problems and their various refutations see Grant 1993, p. 76–88.

⁶⁴ Grant 1993, p. 76; for the insistence of both Marcion and Apelles on the literal interpretation of the Old Testament, see Moll 2010, p. 152–158.

might on the face of it be absurd, but might nevertheless be accompanied by an allegorical or spiritual meaning, according to which the text might satisfactorily be understood.⁶⁵ For some readers this might amount to a complete rejection of the literal meaning.⁶⁶ For Ambrose, however, the attraction appears to have been the scope for maintaining multiple meanings at once – so that, where possible, his exegesis retains the literal understanding even if it seems absurd, insisting only that this absurdity brings with it a more edifying meaning which explains and justifies it. In this he is closest to Philo himself, who sought to show ‘that both literal and nonliteral readings are plausible interpretations of the same text that do not cancel one another’.⁶⁷

In the *De paradiso* and elsewhere, this extended to the borrowing of Philo’s interpretations of individual passages, often without acknowledgement.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, at the only point at which Ambrose directly refers to one of Philo’s readings, it is on grounds which reveal the distinctive emphasis of Ambrose’s own exegetical principles. In discussing the meaning of the statement that Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden *ut operaretur et custodiret*, Ambrose adds a further interpretation of his own to the reading proposed by Philo:

in opere enim quidam uirtutis processus est, in custodia quaedam consummatio operis deprehenditur, eo quod quasi consummata custodiat. haec duo ab homine requiruntur, ut et operibus noua quaerat et parta custodiat, quod est generale. Philon autem, quoniam spiritalia Iudaico non capiebat affectu, intra moralia se tenuit, ut diceret haec duo quaeri, opera in agro, custodiam domus. et quamuis paradisi operibus, inquit, ruralibus non egeret, tamen quia primus homo lex posteritatis futurus erat, ideo legitimi etiam in paradiso speciem suscepit laboris [...].⁶⁹

⁶⁵ For the influence of Philo on Ambrose’s exegesis, see Lucchesi 1977; Savon 1977, 1984; Runia 1993. For his autonomous use of these exegetical models, see Nauroy 2003b, p. 248–251.

⁶⁶ e.g. at Origen, *De principiis* 4.2.9, 4.3.1: Grant 1965, p. 62–66.

⁶⁷ Dawson 1992, p. 100–101.

⁶⁸ Thus Moorhead 1999, p. 72: ‘Long passages in the *De paradiso* [...] are little more than paraphrases of the commentary of Philo’.

⁶⁹ Ambrose, *Par.* 4.25: ‘For in tilling a certain virtue is practised, while in keeping a certain completion of the work is understood, for one keeps it as

The literal interpretation is not entirely absurd, although it is admitted that to work in the Garden was unnecessary; Philo in any case accepts it, but makes it also a moral example to future generations of the importance of agricultural labour and watchfulness at home. While Ambrose notes the limited nature of this interpretation, and blames it explicitly on Philo's Jewishness and so his blindness to Christian revelation, it is important to note that in adding his own reading he does not seek to replace Philo's account. On the contrary, he insists that 'haec duo ergo a te exiguntur siue moraliter siue spiritaliter'.⁷⁰ Neither was to be rejected; both were to be kept in mind.

The insufficiency of Philo here does suggest a hierarchy of meanings which progresses from the literal to the moral and then to the spiritual (usually allegorical) interpretation; and Ambrose does indeed – here and elsewhere – encourage his audience to graduate from the limited readings of the scriptures available to pagans, Jews and other outsiders to readings which make better sense of them as Christian texts.⁷¹ To this extent there is indeed a kind of Christian formation underway here, and an initiation into the mysteries of Scripture. Yet the effect is not esoteric, in the sense of offering wisdom to only a select few: Ambrose's sermons did not serve to separate the sheep from the goats, but on the contrary made these readings available to all who were able to attend and listen. These public exegetical sermons make the point, not that one must progress from one reading to the next, but that there are multiple possible readings of any particular passage, all of which remain valid even as new meanings are recognised. Philo's error was not that he misunderstood the passage but that he did not read deeply enough

it has been completed. These two things are required from man, so that he may seek new work to do and keep what he has produced, as is generally supposed. But Philo, since with his Jewish mindset he did not grasp the spiritual meaning, confined himself to the moral reading, and said that these two things are meant, that one should work in the fields and look after one's home. And although Paradise, he says, did not demand agricultural labour, nevertheless since the first man was to be the law for his descendants, it was for him to undertake a kind of appropriate work even in Paradise'.

⁷⁰ Ambrose, *Par.* 4.25: 'both of these [readings], moral and spiritual, are therefore exacted from you'.

⁷¹ Nauroy 2003b, p. 275–287; cf. Satterlee 2002, p. 115.

into it, and this is the message which Ambrose consistently offers to his audiences. Scripture is set before them as a mystery: not, that is, as something to be solved by mortal readers (as is proved by the example of Paul) but as a text oversupplied with meaning, and rewarding exploration.⁷² As with any mystery, a passage of Scripture loses its interest and its value when reduced to a single meaning.⁷³ Instead, meanings are multiplied: Ambrose does not deny the apparent absurdities and contradictions of the text, and even draws attention to textual variants, all in the cause of opening up a range of interpretations.⁷⁴ The result is a kind of ‘explanatory pluralism’, marked explicitly as options and alternatives, which leave it up to the reader or listener to adopt any or all understandings of a passage as they see fit.⁷⁵

An example of this multiplication of possible meanings may be found in the very next section, as part of Ambrose’s extensive discussion of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁷⁶ He begins by relating God’s instructions to Adam, and notes that in the text of the Septuagint (from which he is evidently working) the invitation to eat from all the trees in the garden is given in the singular, but the prohibition against the tree of knowledge is given in the plural.⁷⁷ This problem, he notes, is *non otiosa*, but he notes that careful study of the scriptures themselves will allow it to be overcome: ‘si diligenter intendas, scripturarum auctoritate absolui potest’.⁷⁸ Ambrose’s proposed solution on this basis is that this invitation is to a recommended course of action and so must be good; and that since good is associated with an essential unity with God, the invitation makes sense in the singular.⁷⁹

⁷² Nauroy 2003d, p. 441, characterising Ambrose’s works as ‘une sorte de forage intellectuel’.

⁷³ Satterlee 2002, p. 221.

⁷⁴ Nauroy 2003b, p. 267; Satterlee 2002, p. 221.

⁷⁵ Nauroy 2003b, p. 267; the term ‘pluralisme explicatif’ is ultimately owed to Savon 1977, p. 30; cf. Satterlee 2002, p. 323, who uses ‘explanatory pluralism’.

⁷⁶ Ambrose, *Par.* 5.26; the discussion of the episode of the tree begins at *Par.* 2.7 and continues as far as 9.45.

⁷⁷ Ambrose, *Par.* 5.26: ‘ex omni ligne quod est in paradiso ad escam edes, de ligno autem quod est scientiae boni et mali non edetis’. For the latter the Septuagint has οὐ φάγεσθες; the Vulgate has the singular *ne comedas*.

⁷⁸ Ambrose, *Par.* 5.26.

⁷⁹ Ambrose, *Par.* 5.26: ‘ergo unum bonum praecipit, tamquam ad unum praecipit dicens: *edes*; unitas enim praeuaricari non potest’.

Conversely, a prohibition of what is bad must be addressed to those who exist outside of this unity, and so must be grammatically plural.⁸⁰ Regardless of how convincing this is, however, Ambrose immediately offers an alternative reading of this crux, introduced almost in passing with the remarkable phrase: ‘ego tamen aliud puto’.⁸¹ The details of this reading – essentially, that God knew that Adam on his own would obey him, but that in concert with Eve he would defy him – are less significant than the undramatic move from what had seemed to be *the* answer to an alternative which Ambrose personally prefers; but which is not intended to diminish the first.

This series of alternatives is then added to by Ambrose’s admission immediately afterwards that the second-century Greek translation of Genesis provided by Symmachus maintains the singular in both uses.⁸² Ambrose explains that this choice may be to bring the prohibition in line with the fact that God elsewhere addresses the Jewish people in the singular; although he suggests in passing that Symmachus is not a credible witness, since he (supposedly) did not believe in the divinity of Christ.⁸³ Yet he also insists that his first interpretation, which treats the people of God as plural, is not undermined by the fact that they are addressed in the singular elsewhere: ‘quia populus Iudaeorum etiam singulariter data praescripta uiolauit’.⁸⁴ Indeed, he goes on to note that God uses a divine language which is by its nature open to alternative interpretations, so that he should be understood in the very same words as speaking plainly to the Jews and prophetically to the Christians.⁸⁵ In all of this, then, we do not see exactly a hierarchy of meanings through which Ambro-

⁸⁰ Ambrose, *Par.* 5.26: ‘quod enim prohibitorium est tamquam pluribus imperatur’.

⁸¹ Ambrose, *Par.* 5.26.

⁸² Ambrose, *Par.* 5.27; the Latin Vulgate edition would also adopt this reading.

⁸³ Ambrose, *Par.* 5.27: Symmachus is called an Ebionite in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.17; Epiphanius of Salamis, *De mens. et pond.* 16, offers an alternative view of him as a Samaritan and Jewish convert.

⁸⁴ Ambrose, *Par.* 5.27: ‘since the Jewish people also individually violated the laws they were given’.

⁸⁵ Ambrose, *Par.* 5.27: ‘lex enim spiritalis est, et ideo alterum in sermone, alterum in praedestinatione diuino populum deus adloquebatur oraculo’.

se's audience is led, from literal misunderstanding to Christian enlightenment. Instead, and more characteristically, we find Ambrose identifying a problem and first offering two alternative readings, of which neither is necessarily to be preferred over the other; before showing that the interpretations of others, while not in this case recommended, are nevertheless by no means contradictory. The discussion ends here, and listeners and readers are left to make up their own minds – having been pointedly reminded, however, of the oracular nature of all divine discourse.

There is indeed 'nothing systematic' about Ambrose's exegesis as we see it here.⁸⁶ There are fundamental principles and patterns on show, but in the end he prefers to retain as much freedom as possible and to deal with each individual problem as it arises. The *De paradiso* thus progresses largely by Ambrose identifying 'another point' or 'another problem', rather than in the service of any developing case or coherent argument.⁸⁷ The looseness of structure typical of these early exegetical sermons, allied to the shortage of systematic exegesis, gives a powerful sense of possibilities being raised without others being dismissed. Ambrose makes no secret of the difficulty of interpreting the scriptures, and is repeatedly willing to declare himself perplexed; more often he reassures his audience that a particular issue is no cause for concern, yet without necessarily presenting it as definitively resolved.⁸⁸ These problems are amenable to discussion, but Ambrose regularly marks that discussion as provisional by emphasising that a particular interpretation is his own personal

⁸⁶ Satterlee 2002, p. 220; cf. Nauroy 2003b, p. 256; cf. 2003d, p. 420. An exegetical model of literal, moral and mystical meanings has sometimes been identified in Ambrose, which aligns neatly with Origenist principles and derives some support from a statement to this effect at Ambrose, *Enarr. in Ps.* 36.1.2: see Savon 1977, p. 65–78; Pizzolato 1978, p. 159–193; Satterlee 2002, p. 222. For Nauroy 2003b, p. 278–287, however, the only consistent schema applied by Ambrose is a far looser recognition of the likely presence of moral and mystical meanings.

⁸⁷ e.g. the consecutive linking phrases in Ambrose, *Par.* 6.31–38: 'alia quaestio'; 'iterum quaestiones serunt'; 'accipe aliud'; 'iterum accipe'; 'iterum alia quaestio subripit'; 'iterum accipe'; 'item accipe'; 'iterum quaestio'. See also Nauroy 2003c, p. 303; Moorhead 1999, p. 96–100; and Satterlee 2002, p. 90: no 'organizing theme or focus statement'.

⁸⁸ Nauroy 2003b, p. 266–267, with examples.

view: hence such phrases in his discussion of Paradise as *puto enim, malo intellegi* and *uerius puto*.⁸⁹

It is an approach encapsulated in Ambrose's consideration of the question of the source from which death came to Adam. He initially offers a reply with what may seem unaccustomed breeziness – *nisi fallor, quia mortis causa inoboedientia fuit, et ideo homo ipse sibi mortis est causa, non habens deum suae mortis auctorem*.⁹⁰ The answer is indeed a persuasive one but, as Ambrose dutifully goes on to address in detail the further questions it raises (regarding God's intentions in creating and then forbidding the tree of knowledge), it seems possible to place real weight on the modest phrase *nisi fallor* ('unless I am mistaken'). Ambrose is doing his best to understand and explain, but he has no more reliable access to the mysteries of faith than has any other interpreter. What is typical of Ambrose's exegesis here is not the apparently straightforward answer, but the ready admission that it may be wrong.

4. *Heresy and the risks of certain knowledge*

Nevertheless, in frankly admitting his own limitations, Ambrose was not forgoing entirely any authority of his own. One advantage of the rhetorical approach as set out above may be seen in Ambrose's attitude towards the alternative readings of Philo and Symmachus, both of whom are presented as limited by their lack of access to Christian revelation. It is most obvious, however, in the space he devotes in *De paradiso* to refuting the bygone heresies of Apelles, who could serve as a highly convenient figure of the archetypal heretic. The mistake of Apelles – for Ambrose – had been to restrict the sense of Scripture to a single, literal interpretation which could then be attacked for its absurdity. In other words, he had imposed his own limited understanding as if it were the only possible meaning of the text. This was the kind of superficiality and arrogance in interpretation which

⁸⁹ Ambrose, *Par.* 44, 53, 60.

⁹⁰ Ambrose, *Par.* 7.35: 'Unless I am mistaken, since disobedience was the cause of death, then man himself was the cause of his own death, and God was not responsible for it'.

Ambrose explicitly disavowed in his exegetical sermons. It was not that he considered every reading equally good, but that he sought to demonstrate to his audience what it meant to be a good reader: that is, to be alive to all available interpretations, and not to devote oneself exclusively to a single proposition.

This moral was explicitly drawn for his audience by means of the example of a hypothetical catechumen ‘eager for the faith’:

legit illi Sabellius: ‘ego in patre et pater in me’ et dicit unam esse personam. legit Photinus quia ‘mediator dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus’ et alibi: ‘quid me uultis occidere hominem?’ legit etiam Arius quia dixit: ‘quoniam pater maior me est’. legitur quidem manifestum, sed qua ratione dictum sit debet ante pertractare se cum, ut rationem dictorum possit aduertere.⁹¹

This is the only place in Ambrose’s exegetical sermons at which he mentions Arius by name, and the point is that his heretical beliefs, like those of the other heretics named, resulted from too great a willingness to seize upon a single phrase of scripture and to elevate it to the level of doctrine. The mistake made by Arius is explicitly commented on: Ambrose admits that Scripture may indeed be read literally (*manifestum*) as exalting the Father over the Son, but that the mistake was in failing to look deeper than the superficial meaning in order to gain a more thorough understanding. Again Ambrose does not dispense with the literal reading of the text; he merely insists that interpretation should not end there. In this light there may be some intentional irony in the juxtaposition of Sabellius and Photinus, whom Ambrose portrays as believing respectively that Christ was wholly God, and wholly human. These are the absurdities which result from too superficial a reading of the scriptures – and, not incidentally, from too great a regard for one’s own capacity as an interpreter. The danger awaiting the unwary novice, and which Ambrose repeats

⁹¹ Ambrose, *Par.* 12.58: ‘Sabellius reads for him: “I am in the Father and the Father in me,” and says that means there is one Person. Photinus reads “there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” and elsewhere: “now you seek to kill me, a man”. Arius too reads where it says: “for the Father is greater than I”. That is indeed what it says, but he ought first to ask himself for what reason it is said, so that he may find the logic of these phrases’. References are to John 14.10; I Timothy 2.5; John 8.40; and John 14.28.

twice in this short passage, is that he or she may be attracted by the air of authority ('quaedam auctoritas') of these teachers, and end up suffering from too much spurious certainty.⁹²

This returns us to a theme encountered at the very beginning of *De paradiso*, again expressed through the example of Paul's vision in II Corinthians. Having been taken up bodily into Paradise, Paul was anxious to avoid seeming to boast; and Ambrose takes up that anxiety to ask 'quanto magis nobis studendum est id sollicitius indicare, cuius etiam reuelatio obnoxia sit periculo!'⁹³ Neither Ambrose nor Paul is especially clear on the nature of the risk involved in relating a knowledge of Paradise, but Paul at least seems highly exercised by the danger of seeming to set himself up as an expert; and we may easily add the likely danger of over-simplifying a matter which surpasses all understanding. This, then, is the model to which Ambrose conforms in his own exegesis. To avoid the risk of misleading his audience, he is careful to remind them of the complexity of the scriptures and of the difficulty of interpretation; and at the same time he disavows the certainty and spurious authority of the heresiarchs, advocating instead a conspicuous modesty. Hence at the very beginning of his discussion of the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden, Ambrose makes clear that in some cases judgement must be withheld and mysteries simply accepted:

nihil habemus, quod nunc reprehendere debeamus, etsi rationem scire non possumus. neque enim in hac creatura mundi, si qua nobis difficilia intellectu uidentur et inconprehensibilia ingenio nostro, temerario quodam debemus condemnare iudicio, ut creaturam serpentium uenenati que alicuius animantis, quippe homines qua ratione singula quaeque sint facta intellegere adhuc et scire non possumus.⁹⁴

⁹² Ambrose, *Par.* 12.58: 'caueat ne [...] tradat se huiusmodi magistris, quorum quaedam eum trahat auctoritas [...] ducitur quadam magistrorum auctoritate'.

⁹³ II Cor. 12:1–10; Ambrose, *Par.* 1.1: 'how much more is it incumbent upon us to be more wary of describing it, when even its revelation brings so much danger!'

⁹⁴ Ambrose, *Par.* 2.7: 'In the meantime we have nothing to reproach ourselves for if we are unable to understand the reasons. Nor in this aspect of creation, if it baffles our intellects and seems too difficult for us to understand, should we condemn it by too hasty a judgement, as we might the creation of venomous

Moreover, the point can be generalised:

sic ergo et in scripturis diuinis non facile reprehendamus aliquid quod intellegere non possumus; sunt enim plurima quae non nostro ingenio metienda sunt, sed ex altitudine diuinae dispositionis et uerbi sunt aestimanda.⁹⁵

The proper approach to Scripture was to be appropriately modest, and to accept that not everything could be understood.

Yet the effect is not to diminish Ambrose's authority as an expert interpreter. For all that he makes a point of marking his readings as personal and provisional, he is simultaneously proving himself an immensely resourceful reader, unafraid of the problems that constantly arise in the text of the scriptures, and capable of coming up with multiple solutions to every problem. Even if he disclaimed the desire to settle on a single answer, or openly despaired of his own ability to communicate the truths of the scriptures, there is no doubt that he must have seemed to his audience more able than most to penetrate the deepest mysteries. Indeed, although the rhetoric is modest, his sermons ultimately render him a genuinely impressive figure: as someone so familiar with the subtleties of Scripture that he knows better than to restrict himself to a single interpretation. The combination of dire warnings about the dangers of too superficial a reading of Scripture with the evident expertise which Ambrose himself displayed in his sermons was thus a powerful way of maintaining and promoting his own authority. In effect, the message is of the form: 'Don't try this at home'. The difficult and even dangerous activity of exegesis was best left to the professionals; idle and popular criticisms of the scriptures were to be disregarded as superficial as well as potentially heretical. After all, if neither Ambrose nor even the apostle Paul could pronounce with certainty on a matter such as Paradise, what hope was there for an ordinary reader?

serpents and other like animals, since men are unable as yet to know and understand the reason why every individual thing was made'.

⁹⁵ Ambrose, *Par.* 2.7: 'Thus also in Holy Scripture we should not rush to criticise something which we cannot understand; for there are many things which are not within the grasp of our intellects, but must be seen from the elevated vantage point of Divine Providence and as the Word'.

Conclusion: The uses of ambiguity

Ambrose's rhetoric of modesty in *De paradiso*, and in his exegetical sermons more generally, thus allowed him to maintain his authority as an expert interpreter without ever committing to particular claims and interpretations which were open to challenge. Moreover, it may be argued that this is precisely what Augustine found inspiring about his sermons. Augustine, of course, was not in Milan at the time of *De paradiso*, and yet Ambrose's principles were at least in this respect consistent throughout the course of his exegetical preaching. Indeed, so too were his examples: it is possible that Augustine could have heard Ambrose deliver the sermons which underlie the treatise *De interpellatione Iob et David*, in which the familiar theme of the limits of scriptural interpretation is revisited, with the same example of Paul:

quid curiose cupis inuestigare quod tibi scire non expedit nec cognoscere datur? Paulus audiuit aliqua secreta sapientiae, quae prohibitus est alius intimare, et ideo raptus est in paradisum, raptus usque ad tertium caelum, ut audiret ea quae positus in terris audire non poterat. si quae audiuit homo, non licuit ei loqui, quemadmodum quod non audiuit inquiri?⁹⁶

For Augustine, who at this stage of his life is definable by nothing if not spiritual curiosity, this passage – or any other along the same lines – would have come as a bracing shock; and this is precisely what appears in the account he gives of the effect of Ambrose's preaching. What he initially took from Ambrose's sermons was not, at first, that they made a positive case for the truth of Christianity, but rather that they assured him of a negative case: they convinced him that the Manichaean criticisms

⁹⁶ Ambrose, *De interp. Iob et David* 1.9.29: 'Why do you desire with such curiosity to investigate that which it is not useful for you to know nor is given to you to understand? Paul heard certain secrets of wisdom, which he was forbidden to communicate to another, and for that reason was taken into paradise, taken into the third heaven, so that he might hear things which he was not able to hear while still on earth. If the things this man heard he was not permitted to speak of, why inquire after what you have not heard?' Courcelle 1968, p. 98–132 proposes that Augustine may have heard this sermon in 387, based on his citations of II Cor. 3:6: see Augustine, *Conf.* 5.14.24, and especially 6.4.6, with O'Donnell 1992, *ad loc.*

of the Christian scriptures were grounded in a false and simplistic reading. Augustine, as he makes clear with repeated use of Paul's edict that the letter kills and the spirit gives life, was first persuaded by Ambrose's preaching that the scriptures were not as absurd as a literal reading might suggest.⁹⁷

He acknowledges that this had not yet been enough either to demolish his prior convictions or to prove Christianity beyond doubt, but we should not for that reason pass too quickly over his claims for the effectiveness of Ambrose's rhetorical strategy. The point is made over and over again that Ambrose's preaching made clear that problems in the scriptures could be solved, without (in Augustine's case) compelling assent to a particular solution:

nam primo etiam ipsa defendi posse mihi iam coeperunt uideri, et fidem catholicam [...] iam non impudenter adseri existimabam, maxime audito uno atque altero et saepius aenigmate soluto de scriptis ueteribus, ubi, cum ad litteram acciperem, occidebar.⁹⁸

Similarly, Augustine was persuaded by this that Ambrose's brand of Christianity could be defended, 'quia et ipsa poterat habere doctos adsertores suos, qui copiose et non absurde obiecta refellerent' – even if the fact that its doctrine no longer contained obvious absurdities did not at this point persuade him to adopt it himself.⁹⁹ When he returns to the topic of Ambrose's preaching in the following book, Augustine makes the same point again: that he no longer read the text with an attitude that found it absurd, having learned from Ambrose that spiritual interpretations could open up more possibilities.¹⁰⁰ Above all, though, he seems to hint at the intent or at least the advantage of Ambro-

⁹⁷ II Cor. 3:6; Augustine, *Conf.* 5.14.24; 6.4.6.

⁹⁸ Augustine, *Conf.* 5.14.24: 'For at first the things themselves began to seem to me capable of being defended, and the catholic faith [...] I now considered it not shameful to affirm; above all having heard one and another and indeed many points from the Old Testament unpicked by spiritual interpretation, where, when I had understood them literally, I was killed'.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *Conf.* 5.14.24: 'since it was able to have its own intellectual defenders, who could reply fully and without absurdity to objections'.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *Conf.* 6.4.6: 'iam non illo oculo mihi legenda proponerentur quo antea uidebantur absurda'.

se's exegetical style, which explained away many points which seemed unacceptable ('ea quae ad litteram peruersitatem docere uidebantur'), while saying nothing to cause Augustine any difficulty ('non dicens quod me offenderet').¹⁰¹ The language here consistently emphasises that Ambrose stripped away the absurdities that might be read into the text, but does not describe anything in particular that replaced them. Of course this must partially reflect the unusual situation and the intensity of Augustine's intellectual commitments, but it is nonetheless a revealing kind of praise. Ambrose's striking influence is not made a matter of his leading Augustine to any particular proposition; his (indispensable) contribution was merely to remove certain obstacles from Augustine's path.

Augustine provides our best testimony to the experience of listening to Ambrose's sermons, but we may imagine that he was not the only member of his Milan congregation for whom this rhetorical approach was effective, and for many of the same reasons. There were benefits, after all, to leaving mysteries unsolved. Given the likely diversity of belief – and even of exposure to the central tenets of Christianity – among the audience for Ambrose's weekly sermon, an approach which emphasised this commonality and unity is likely to have made more practical sense than one which pinned its success to the acceptance of particular propositions. It is clear that Ambrose had an interest in promoting and maintaining unity elsewhere in his interactions with the people of Milan, a desire of which his hymns are the most obvious manifestation.¹⁰² After all, whether or not there existed strongly-defined and rival doctrinal communities in the city, it is clear that there was at least the potential for division: if not along doctrinal lines, then between Christians and non-Christians, city and court, perhaps even (albeit more amicably) between baptised and unbaptised.¹⁰³ In short,

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *Conf.* 6.4.6; Satterlee 2002, p. 91 translates as 'he said nothing which offended me'.

¹⁰² Satterlee 2002, p. 118; on the hymns as a deliberate strategy to promote unity, see Williams 2013.

¹⁰³ Williams 1995 is the most detailed account of doctrinal divisions within Milan; but see Kaufman 1997 and the responses *ad loc.* for some of the matters which seem still open to discussion.

it is likely that every week in his basilica Ambrose was faced with an audience who had little in common except their desire to hear him preach. Maintaining his own authority in these circumstances was more than a matter of keeping everyone happy; but all the same, Ambrose's ruminative method, and his deferential of any ultimate meaning, made the interpretation of scripture a common endeavour uniting bishop and congregation, in which nothing was affirmed which could not be revisited, and which proved the profundity of the scriptures to the satisfaction of even so intelligent a sceptic as Augustine. The bishop himself, and his views, to some extent disappear in this enterprise.¹⁰⁴ His approach emphasised process rather than outcome, and downplayed the significance of particular readings in favour of a common task of interpretation.

Ambrose thus explicitly rejected the kind of slogans and formulas which so often fuelled contemporary doctrinal divisions; he rejected too the spurious claims to authority which he claimed were typical of others, substituting instead a conspicuous modesty in the face of the mysteries of Scripture. Such an approach was by no means unique to Ambrose, and indeed in the eastern part of the Roman empire, contemporary doctrinal debates led other Christian commentators to adopt what was to some extent a similar strategy. Hence the philosophical speculations of Eunomius and his allies prompted refutations from Basil of Caesarea and his brother Gregory of Nyssa which emphasised that the claim to certain knowledge of God was illegitimate and a mark of heretical overreaching.¹⁰⁵ In the late 380s, John Chrysostom in Antioch would attack the same broad target by means of a series of sermons explicitly setting out the incomprehensibility of God.¹⁰⁶ Yet for all that these works

¹⁰⁴ Nauroy 2003b, p. 299–300: 'l'interprète [...] cherche [...] à s'effacer pour ne pas faire l'écran, et laisse face à face en une sorte de dialogue direct le Verbe divin et le peuple chrétien'.

¹⁰⁵ Both authors wrote works given the title *Contra Eunomium*: for commentary on these aspects in particular, see esp. Mortley 1986, vol. 2, p. 169, 177, and Lim 1992, p. 156–157. Ambrose was certainly familiar with Basil and his works; Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium*, however, must be placed after Basil's death at the beginning of 379 and so is likely to be later than the *De paradiso*.

¹⁰⁶ John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura homiliae* 1–12 [PG 48.701–812].

possessed a similar advantage to Ambrose's approach in allowing the speaker to insist on the importance of uncertainty in theological speculation, they were presented nevertheless as polemics in a way that Ambrose resisted in his sermons in Milan. In each case the effect was to establish the invulnerability of the orthodox position to being pinned down by claims of certain knowledge; but for Ambrose at least this was not a charge directed against any opponents in his Milanese audience. On the contrary, it was a way for him to rise above doctrinal debate.

This is not of course to say that Ambrose had no views of his own, nor even that he kept them a secret. He did indeed engage in doctrinal disputation in his works, and sometimes even in those which appear to have begun as sermons to a broader audience. Among these writings aimed at a public rather broader than a small number of catechumens, Ambrose's *De fide*, *De spiritu sancto* and *De incarnatione* stand out for their sustained discussions of heresy; and yet even here it is possible to recognise certain strategies that blunt any offence that they might have threatened to cause their immediate audience. All three of these works were commissioned by an emperor or a senior member of the imperial court, and are most plausibly responses to direct attacks on or (in the case of *De incarnatione*) a specific challenge to Ambrose's own orthodoxy.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, in each case Ambrose largely devotes his time to denouncing discredited heresies: in particular 'Arianism' and the beliefs of Arius, which even in Ambrose's often inaccurate account bear little relation to anything that will have been believed in contemporary Milan.¹⁰⁸ This is the strategy we

¹⁰⁷ For the contexts of *De fide* and *De spiritu sancto*, see especially Nautin 1974, p. 239–242; McLynn 1994, p. 98–99; Barnes 1999. These accounts are to be preferred to those of Williams 1995, p. 141–144. For the context of the *De incarnatione*, McLynn 1994, p. 148–149 is again preferable to Williams 1995, p. 185.

¹⁰⁸ Williams 1995, p. 141–144, and Marksches 2005, p. 47 prefer to suppose some relevance to Milan; but see Barnes 1999, p. 173. Hanson 1988, p. 669, denies the immediate theological relevance of the arguments of *De fide*; Marksches 2005, p. 58–59, McLynn 1994, p. 103 and Williams 1995, p. 146–147 accept the focus on and misrepresentation of an outdated 'Arian' heresy; the same strategy is followed in *De spiritu sancto*. Attacks on discredited heretics also feature in the introduction to *De incarnatione* (at 2.6–2.10), although the remainder is mostly devoted to attacking Apollinarians (who might conceivably have been in Milan) and Ambrose's enemies elsewhere: Williams 1995, p. 190–191.

have already recognised in *De paradiso*, in the use of Apelles as a convenient opponent whose wrongness was widely accepted; and indeed in the explicit mention of Arius among a string of established heresiarchs, none of whose names will have commanded any loyalty in the Milan of the 370s. It is true that there will have been those in the crowd who disagreed with Ambrose on particular details of his position: it is a rare speaker for whom that is untrue. But despite the very real potential for division among his congregation, Ambrose should not be thought to have responded with polemic against a segment of his audience. Instead, he invited the whole of his audience to join him, not in the confidence of possessing an absolute truth, but in the quest to discover it.

Such a strategy is perhaps only to be expected in an exegetical sermon, in which the subject of doctrine could easily be avoided.¹⁰⁹ But it is important that Ambrose does not deal with heresy in *De paradiso* by avoiding mention of it entirely. Instead he sets out not only to show that the simplistic assertions of the archetypal heretics are to be rejected, but also to demonstrate to his audience that any such assertion must inevitably be provisional. Ambrose's very modesty thus grants him an authority more secure than that of the heretics, as it does not stand or fall according to any single claim. In place of instruction in a definite doctrine, he put on display for his audience a spectacle of attentive reading and open-ended interpretation. In his sermons he 'ranged across the Old Testament, unravelling one mystery after another', and producing 'an exhilarating fizzing of paradoxes which conjured up the possibility that sense could be made of the whole'.¹¹⁰ Yet it remained only a possibility. The primary effect of these sermons was not, in the end, to make Scripture fully comprehensible, but rather to show how much an expert reader – such as Ambrose – could derive from even the most difficult and unpromising passage. It was thus a demonstration of Ambrose's expertise as a resourceful interpreter of Scripture, and at the same time a warning to others of the dangers of a less

¹⁰⁹ But cf. e.g. Satterlee 2002, p. 3, n. 4: 'bishops addressed doctrinal issues from the pulpit generally and in their catechetical instruction in particular'.

¹¹⁰ McLynn 1994, p. 240.

profound and less careful reading. Ambrose himself was at home with the scriptures, and could make sense of them on his congregation's behalf; but this was a task best left to him, as their bishop and representative.

Ambrose thus dramatized his encounter with the text as a performance in which, as Brian Stock has said, 'he appeared to be thinking as he was reading and reading as he was thinking'.¹¹¹ Rather than reduce the range of possible interpretations to a single doctrinal assertion, he offered the scriptures instead as an object of endless and inexhaustible contemplation. This is a tendency well captured in two famous Ambrosian meditations on silence. One is the story of another encounter between Augustine and Ambrose in Milan, in which the eager Augustine is seeking advice from the bishop, but finds himself unwilling to disturb him:

secludentibus me ab eius aure atque ore cateruis negotiosorum hominum, quorum infirmitatibus seruebat: cum quibus quando non erat [...] aut corpus reficiebat necessariis sustentaculis aut lectione animum. sed cum legebat, oculi ducebantur per paginas et cor intellectum rimabatur, uox autem et lingua quiescebant. saepe, cum adessemus [...] sic eum legentem uidimus tacite et aliter numquam.¹¹²

This was the core of Ambrose's authority as an interpreter of the scriptures: what he offered was not understanding itself, but the spectacle of a man engaged – with no guarantee of success – in the difficult task of seeking to understand.

But we should not think of this as unselfconscious. Ambrose would come to expand on the numerous dangers involved in speaking too much, too openly, or with too much confidence – dangers which included that of being condemned out of one's own mouth:

¹¹¹ Stock 1996, p. 60; cf. Nauroy 2003b, p. 247–251.

¹¹² Augustine, *Conf.* 6.3.3: 'I was separated from his ear and from his mouth by crowds of men with arbitrations to submit to him, to whose frailties he ministered. When he was not with them [...] he restored either his body with necessary sustenance or his mind by reading. But as he read, his eyes were led over the page and his heart comprehended the sense, but his voice and tongue were still. Often when we were there [...] we saw him reading in silence and never otherwise'.

quid autem prae ceteris debemus discere, quam tacere, ut possumus loqui: ne prius me uox condemnet mea, quam absoluat aliena? scriptum est enim: *ex uerbis tuis condemnaueris*. quid opus est igitur ut properes periculum suscipere condemnationis, loquendo, cum tacendo possis est tutior?¹¹³

This is merely the opening of an extended disquisition on silence at the start of Ambrose's *De officiis*, implicitly presenting silence as the first duty of a bishop. Yet whether or not this was Ambrose's idea of his duty at the start of his episcopacy, we can scarcely doubt that it was a policy that served him well. Ambrose's public display of uncertainty in the face of the scriptures, and his emphasis on the traps that they held for the unwary, not only did nothing to diminish his authority among his congregation: combined with his capacity to render the scriptures infinitely productive of meaning, it surely did much to affirm it. After all, given the dangers of unlicensed interpretation, or of an inadequate or superficial reading, the church of Milan must have found itself all the more in need of an expert guide.

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¹¹³ Ambrose, *De off.* 1.2.5: 'What then ought we to learn before all else, if not to keep silent in order to speak; and so that my own voice may not condemn me, before another's saves me? For it is written: "By your own words shall you be condemned". [Matt. 12:37] Hence what need is there to run the risk of condemning yourself by speaking when by keeping silent you could be safer?'

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Abstract

A significant source of Ambrose of Milan's authority as a bishop and church father was and is derived from his interaction with his congregation, in particular by means of a weekly sermon in the basilica in Milan. Ambrose's early exegetical works may be taken to preserve something of the character of this interaction, although they were significantly revised for publication; and on the basis of one of his earliest exegetical treatises, *De paradiso*, Ambrose's sermons are here argued to have combined a certain elusiveness of structure and language with an explicit emphasis on the complex and provisional nature of scriptural interpretation itself. On this basis it is suggested that Ambrose's homiletic and exegetical style had the dual effect of establishing the difficulties and dangers of careless and unsophisticated interpretation of the scriptures and demonstrating Ambrose's own authority as an expert interpreter. Augustine of Hippo's reflections on his own experience of Ambrose's preaching further suggest that this emphasis allowed the bishop of Milan to make an inclusive appeal to a highly diverse audience, by means of showing that contentious readings of the scriptures very often relied on a simplistic and insufficiently careful reading of the biblical text. By refusing to commit himself to a single interpretation, and by admitting the complexity of the task and the possibility of error, Ambrose (at least in this context) held back from the dogmatic imposition of a doctrinal formula. He instead advised and modelled an attitude of humility and even silence – which helped establish him as a profound as well as an expert and authoritative exegete.

REVISITING AN AUTHORITY'S SECRET(S) OF SUCCESS: THE RISE AND DECLINE OF THE LATIN ATHANASIUS

1. *'Athanasius' and the West*

The Porta Nigra in Trier is widely known as the best preserved Roman city gate north of the Alps.¹ The reason for its preservation is less well-known. For a long time between its construction in the second century and today it was in fact a church. The hermit Simeon died there in 1035, after some years of using part of the gate as his cell, and bishop Poppo, who had invited Simeon there, initiated the church project in 1041. Thus, the glory of the hermit 'Saint Simeon' became in some part the glory of Trier, the city which now had 'Saint Simeon' – the church.²

But when in the 18th century the vestibule of the lower church was decorated with nine relief portraits, it was clear that the city had more authorities connected to it. The portraits in the vestibule were arranged in two opposite rows:³

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Athanasius | Augustine | (Title) | Jerome | Ambrose |
| Paul of Constantinople | Theodor of Marseille | Leo IX | Bernhard of Clairvaux | Martin of Tours |

¹ For the history and architecture of this building see Gose 1969.

² A reconstruction of Simeon's life with a focus on his time at Trier has been offered by Heyen 2002, p. 467–483.

³ The building of Saint Simeon was adapted to the original structure of a big Roman city gate, with the former ground floor being reserved for the memorial of the saint who had lived there; a staircase leading to the rooms of a double church, which were built into the former second (lower church) and third floor (upper church) of the Porta Nigra. See the detailed description by Heyen 2002, p. 39–86.

The choice of these persons may be quite easy to explain: all are famous men in church history, each lending Trier a bit of their glory by their stay and work in this city.⁴ As Franz-Joseph Heyen has pointed out, this focus on historical figures can be understood as a deliberate counterpoint to the legendary saints of the ‘Theban legion’ who were venerated at the Saint Paulinus, a church in the vicinity of the Porta Nigra.⁵ The saints in the vestibule of Saint Simeon drew their authority from traceable events in history. In this respect they answered the intellectual standards of the Enlightenment: authority without a historical basis was in decline.⁶ Regarding the arrangement of the saints, one aspect deserves special notice: one row contains only four persons, divided into two groups of two by a title-medallion in the middle which informs the visitor: ‘HI // TESTI- // MONIUM // FIDEI // NOSTRAE // PERHI- // BENT’.⁷ Since Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome traditionally have the title ‘*doctores ecclesiae*’, this row has a clear program in respect of their authority:⁸ Martin of Tours in the other row may be a saint as well, but the teachers of the church played in a league on their own. Seen like this, Trier was connected with a complete group

⁴ Under each portrait an inscription specifies the relationship between the saint and Trier; see the transcriptions in Heyen 2002, p. 142–144, 149.

⁵ See Heyen 2002, p. 141.

⁶ It goes without saying that it always depends on the particular state of knowledge and assumptions, which elements of tradition are supposed to be ‘historical’ (as the antonym of ‘fictive’ or ‘legendary’) – and which of these elements count. For example, there is some discussion about the biography of Paul of Constantinople today (cf. the reconstruction by Barnes 1993, p. 212–217), but what counted for the vestibule of Saint Simeon was Paul’s reputation as an Anti-Arian saint and martyr, who was exiled three times ‘by the Arians’ and murdered in the end (as Athanasius told in *Hist. Ar.*, 7, 3–6). During his first exile he stayed at Trier in c. 342 and was tried together with Athanasius, who had his second Western exile at this time, to regain their sees. It was of no interest in this context, that Paul had signed Athanasius’ condemnation on the synod of Tyre 335 (cf. Athanasius Werke (= AW) 2007, Dok. 43.11,14), which caused Athanasius’ first exile to Trier in 335–337.

⁷ ‘These (men) offer testimony of our faith (or: for our faith!?)’; Latin text in Heyen 2002, p. 142 (Heyen gives on p. 141 a translation like mine without parentheses; it may be a minor point that the Latin words *nostrae fidei* can be genitive and dative at the same time).

⁸ ‘Teachers of the [occidental Latin] church’; see for this term Smolinsky 2001, col. 819–823 and Mucci 1997, p. 567–574, with further literature and references to the sources.

of the highest ranking theologians and saints – and offered connections to other famous ones as well.

However, for the full point of this teachers-of-the-church-explanation the fourth official teacher of the Western Latin tradition seems to be missing: Gregory the Great. In his stead, bishop Athanasius of Alexandria has the fourth place in the row, who may at best be counted as one of the Eastern Greek teachers of the church. This may upset the given explanation. In the eyes of an 18th-century Trierian catholic, one teacher may have been as good as the other.⁹ But from the viewpoint of an ideal conception, it might have seemed that Athanasius functioned as a mere stopgap for the missing Gregory.

Yet in this case specific circumstances have to be considered. In contrast to Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianz and John Chrysostom, the (other) Eastern teachers of the church, Athanasius had lived in the West for some years, and he was integrated into the Latin tradition from the late fourth century onwards by a number of texts, some of which will be mentioned later.¹⁰ It is in light of this historical incorporation into the Latin tradition that one of the three late ancient creeds that formed the standard from Carolingian times onwards, the so-called 'Quicumque', was handed down under his name.¹¹ Athanasius was thus represented not only in the liturgy beside the Apostolic and the Nicene creed, but was also mentioned by theologians like Jerome and later Hincmar of Reims alongside genuine Western doctors.¹²

⁹ The Roman Church knew Greek teachers of the church, too; cf. Mucci 1997, p. 568.

¹⁰ Due to the lack of further scholarship I have to refer throughout this contribution mainly to some introductory articles which offer a preliminary overview: Müller 2010, p. 3–42 and Müller 2011, p. 378–384, with references to former attempts to position Athanasius in the Latin tradition. The subsequent remarks on Latin texts under the name of Athanasius will sometimes be kept short, because many problems in the 'Einleitungsfragen' are still not solved.

¹¹ The scholarly discussion on the Athanasian Creed seemed for long to be resolved by Kelly 1964, which also summarizes the importance of this creed in church history. It has been the merit of Volker Henning Drecoll to re-open the discussion, Drecoll 2007, p. 30–65; see now also Drecoll 2011, p. 386–390.

¹² For this branch of reception see Müller 2012, p. 19–40, esp. p. 32–34. As I have tried to show in this article, the attribution of the 'Quicumque' to Athanasius was probably not a secondary act and surely not due to mere chance (as Drecoll seems to suppose).

In sum, against this background the function of Athanasius in the row of reliefs in Trier could be that of a *Western* church teacher, a genuine *replacement* of Gregory the Great. Given his historical connection to Trier, which Gregory did not have, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Athanasius' appearance in Trier was conceived as a real equivalent to Gregory.

This interpretation of a pictorial phenomenon testifies to the result of a process whereby a bishop of Alexandria, who probably never wrote a word in Latin, was established in Western Christian culture. Most further evidence for this process, however, is textual. This dossier consists of a number of Latin texts transmitted under his name which include some translations from Greek 'Athanasius-texts', with few translations from authentic texts. The most influential texts of this group are, however, original Latin pseudepigrapha. Yet, they were handed down in pre-modern Western Christianity as undisputed works of the famous Alexandrian bishop and thus formed a picture of their alleged author.¹³ In order to highlight the fact that the contents of this group of texts actually led to the construction of a unique Athanasian identity, and to differentiate it from the other branches of the Athanasian tradition, I shall employ the term 'Latin Athanasius'.

Each of these Latin literary representations originated at different times. Thus the 'Latin Athanasius' is a diverse construct, often different from the historical bishop who died in Alexandria in 373. But as I have tried to show elsewhere, the Latin texts under his name are always focused on a small set of themes, which were combined at the level of reception.¹⁴ There are collections of these texts in manuscripts, and theologians from the Middle Ages like Hincmar cite them one after the other to show that their doctrine is in harmony with that of Athanasius.¹⁵

All of this raises the question of *how* the bishop of Alexandria became (in the guise of the 'Latin Athanasius') an integral part of the Western Christian discourse? From the investigation

¹³ See Müller 2010, p. 35. The actual state of scholarship on the life, work and importance of the historical Athanasius is now accessible through the *Athanasius Handbuch* (Gemeinhardt 2011).

¹⁴ See Müller 2010, p. 34.

¹⁵ Cf. note 12.

of the texts under his name, supplemented by other sources, especially late antique church historians, three factors emerge as explanations for the success of the Latin Athanasius: the *Vita Antonii* as an influential, widespread prototypical writing; the fabulous, heroic character of his life; his staunch defense of what he considered correct doctrine.

2. His 'bestselling' Vita Antonii

The 18th-century relief inscription at the St. Simeon gives the following connection of the Alexandrian bishop to Trier:

*S(anctus) // (At)ANASIUS // (Primus) // MONACHORU(m)
// VITAM // TREVIROS // DOCUIT // A(nno) 336*¹⁶

This statement connects the Alexandrian with one of the premier Western teachers through a common interest in monasticism. The statement about Augustine says:

*TREVIRENSIUM//ANACHORETARU(m)//EXEMPLO
// XTO (= Christo) // LUCRI // FACTUS // A(nn)O
386*¹⁷

From Augustine's *Confessiones* we know that Augustine only *heard* a story about some people's decision to become monks after they had found the hermits' cabin near Trier. But this story became a stimulus for him to convert to an ascetic life himself. And the Treverian *agentes in rebus* converted not after having spoken to the hermits, but after having read Athanasius' *Vita Antonii* (*Life of Antony*), a copy of which lay in the empty cabin.¹⁸

¹⁶ 'Saint Athanasius as the first one taught the people of Trier the life (or lifestyle) of the monks in the year 336.' The text is presented by Heyen 2002, p. 142, who also offers photographs of the reliefs on p. 145–148. As I can confirm from visits to Trier, the stone with the Athanasius inscription is slightly damaged, but there is no doubt about the correct reading.

¹⁷ 'He was won for Christ by the example of the hermits of Trier in the year 386'.

¹⁸ See Aug., *Conf.*, VIII 6,15 (Augustinus Hipponensis, *Confessiones*, ed. M. Skutella, Leipzig, 1996 [Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana]). Due to the shortness of Augustine's description it is not easy to decide whether the hermits' copy of the *Vita Antonii* was in Greek, as the original was, or in a Latin translation. It is at least possible that they used the

By the word *PRIMUS* Athanasius seems to be at the same time connected with the local monastic hero Simeon, who later gave *another* example of monastic life to the Treverians. It may be at least significant that there is no counterpart to *PRIMUS* (in connection with monastic teaching) within the row of inscriptions in the vestibule. The predicative sense of the word should urge the reader to find such a counterpart in the wider context of the building and thus in Saint Simeon himself.

However, there is no ancient source which may be taken as evidence that Athanasius in fact taught anything about monasticism at Trier. We only know that he later brought Egyptian monks to Rome.¹⁹ The plausibility of the statement in the inscription is based on the fact that Athanasius was seen as *the* renowned teacher of monasticism – and thus one could expect that he acted as such in Trier, too. The basis for all this was the historical Athanasius' idea to write a Life of the Egyptian hermit Antony after his death in 356.²⁰ It was the first literary piece of its kind and soon became a 'bestseller', since it filled a lacuna which arose in connection with the success of the monastic movement in the 4th century: many Christians wanted to know the lifestyle and teachings of the famous hermit. By satisfying a general demand for an easily accessible narrative, Athanasius became their teacher himself. His *Vita Antonii* was written in Greek and contained side blows against schismatics and 'Arians' (i.e. Athanasius' enemies at home). But it was addressed to 'the monks in the outland', which seems to mean in the West and thus Italy or – perhaps a bit less probable – Gaul.²¹ In the next years and before Athanasius' death two Latin translations emerged: an anonymous one, of which it is difficult to determine the provenance; and one by Evagrius, who later became bishop in Antioch, composed

popular translation of Evagrius (see below). This would mean that the story of the *agentes in rebus* was one of the first examples of the 'Wirkungsgeschichte' of the 'Latin Athanasius'.

¹⁹ See Sokrates, *h.e.*, IV 23 and for the situation in Rome with focus on noble ascetic women Letsch-Brunner 1998, p. 27–28.

²⁰ For the *Vita Antonii* and the rich literature on it see Bumazhnov 2011, p. 255–265 (with bibliography on p. 263–265).

²¹ This seems to be the *communis opinio* now. The idea that the address to 'the monks in the outland' is a fake, ignores the early existence of Latin translations; cf. Müller 2010, p. 17 with n. 35.

in Northern Italy, where different monastic groups emerged.²² Many hagiographical writings in Latin written in the subsequent generations, beginning with those by Jerome, can be seen as some sort of continuation of or reaction to the *Life of Antony*. Each of these writings implicitly contributed to Athanasius' authority as a teacher of monasticism, for many contemporaries the ideal Christian life. However, as is clear from this survey, many authors did not read the Greek original, but a Latin translation – and primarily that of Evagrius,²³ whom Jerome presented as a role model for good translation practice.²⁴ Evagrius' translation was in elegant Latin, and sometimes functioned more as an interpretation,²⁵ which evidently fit the purposes of a large and diverse Western audience.²⁶ For a Western reader without knowledge of Greek, differences to the original were not discernible: the *Vita Antonii* of Evagrius simply *was* the *Vita Antonii*.

This dispersal of translation activity is quite different from the construction of Athanasian monastic authority in subsequent centuries. Probably still in the fifth century, for instance, a letter of the monk Pelagius to a virgin Claudia was transmitted under the name of Athanasius. The most obvious reason which can be supposed, was to preserve the teaching of a condemned heretic by a famous epithet on the text.²⁷ It embodies a monastic optimistic attitude to the possibilities of humans leading a holy life without (divine) assistance, which is characteristic for Pelagius. Antony, Athanasius' hero, is depicted by his biographer as

²² For the dating and localization see Müller 2011, p. 382–383.

²³ The traces of reception of Evagrius' translation in later Lives of Saints have been investigated by Bertrand 2005, who also offers a new edition of the text.

²⁴ See Hier., *Ep.*, 57, 6.

²⁵ As Bartelink 1972 pointed out, Evagrius also placed emphasis on some theological ideas which were not found in the original text. An example is the demonology which received more space in Evagrius' text, thus propagating an interest in the subject.

²⁶ The character of Evagrius' translation can be easily estimated by a comparison with the anonymous one. See e.g. the differences between the prologue of Evagrius and the epilogue of the anonymous version, which are compared in Müller 2010, p. 16–17.

²⁷ For the ascription to Pelagius and the edition of the text see Müller 2010, p. 24. In the light of Pelagius' condemnation, especially for his position on human free will and its possibilities, it seems less probable that Athanasius became the alleged author of this text by misunderstanding.

a humble man depending fully on God's grace.²⁸ Yet, the label worked. Pelagius' letter was received as an *Exhortatio ad sponsam Christi* in the collection of proof texts in the Acts of the council of Aachen in 813, which was to establish regulations for future monastic life in the Middle Ages.²⁹ Someone seems to have been discontent with the one-sided address to a woman some time before this event, since there is also an *Exhortatio ad monachos* under Athanasius' name in the same context.³⁰

Another example is a late medieval version of the Life of the Sicilian presbyter Philip, which claims Athanasius as its author in order to make it plausible that Philip was a contemporary of the apostles – and not, as he was, of the emperor Arcadius.³¹

Thus, Athanasius' authority grew not only through his best-seller's reception, but also through the effects of the aura of the pinnacle of the perfect life which soon surrounded the teacher of monasticism and inventor of the late antique Christian (sub-) genre of the *Vita*.³² This aura had a double effect on the literary level. On the one hand, it became plausible to accept a text

²⁸ This has been pointed out by Roldanus 1983, who demonstrates that this significant 'christological' concept of sanctity has been ignored or deliberately changed by virtually all recipients who produced ascetic literature in the 5th century.

²⁹ See Müller 2010, p. 24. It would be interesting to trace the reception of the 'Athanasian' texts of this collection in later monastic discourses.

³⁰ See Müller 2010, p. 29 and the previous note. Unfortunately, we do not know anything more about the text's date and place of origin. The idea in PG 28,71, that the text was written in Carolingian times as a counterpart of the *Exhortatio ad sponsam Christi* is at least worth further investigation. If it were true, this would be a further example of the phenomenon that one pseudepigraphic work stimulates the production of another one; see below III.

³¹ The *Vita Philippi presbyteri Argyriensis* was originally written in Greek. It describes the life of the local saint, whose birth is dated to the reign of Arcadius. The author of the later Latin version changed this date and some further information so that Philipp appeared to have met saint Peter. Athanasius lived of course later than the apostles, but before Arcadius – and he was a settled authority in describing the life of a saint, thus 'proving' the correctness of the given date. For the details and literature cf. Müller 2010, p. 31.

³² Of course, the wider genre of biography already existed in pre-Christian Greek-Roman literature. But despite all similarities, Athanasius invented with his *Vita Antonii* a specific Christian way of describing a holy man's life. Possibly due to this fact, there is a still open and perhaps partially misguided debate about the pagan model that he adopted; cf. the overview and literature in Bumazhnov 2011. However, the underlying theo-/christological motivation of events not only differed from classical models (as by Nepos or Suetonius), but also from

dealing with monasticism as Athanasian when it was presented as such, since Athanasius was competent for this subject. On the other hand, Athanasius was an attractive epithet for those who needed an undisputed witness for the ideas in their ascetic or monastic writings.

If someone had read all Latin monastic texts under Athanasius' name together, he probably would have got the impression that the bishop of Alexandria had some ambiguities in his conception of monasticism. But none of the extant sources reflect this critical perspective. Athanasius derived the formative power of a monastic authority from the famous *Vita Antonii*, while other 'Athanasian' texts on the subject served the purposes of their historical authors and transmitters by some modifications, but without disturbing the established picture.

3. *His fabulous life*

Writing a 'bestseller' such as the *Vita Antonii* impresses its readership all the more if it is reputed that the life of the author fits the contents of the narrative. And here Athanasius' biography had much to offer. Five times in exile, the first two times in the Latin West (335–337 in Trier, 339–346 in Rome, Northern Italy, again Trier, Milan, Serdica, etc.),³³ then with the monks in the Egyptian desert, hunted by emperors, living with the austerity of an ascetic, but never seeming to change his orthodox mind. He was resolute in his interests and a master in presenting this struggle as a fight of good against evil. For this purpose he wrote different apologies stating his case.³⁴ However, as far as we know, none of these apologies were translated into Latin in pre-modern times³⁵ and the traces of reception of the origi-

former Christian attempts, which never comprised the life of a saint (martyr) as a whole; see for the Christian development Berschin 1986.

³³ Cf. the biographic overview by Georges 2011.

³⁴ See Portmann 2011 and Piepenbrink 2011, with further literature respectively.

³⁵ Of course, there have been Latin translations of Athanasius' works in early modern times, beginning with the humanist period, and all Greek texts in PG 26–28 have a Latin translation by their side. But these translations belong to a beginning *scholarly research* on the historical Athanasius., which caused the decline of the Latin Athanasius; see below and Müller 2010, p. 13.31.

nals in the West are few. But some Western contemporaries like Hilary of Poitiers possibly knew some of Athanasius' apologetic works; and they clearly adopted his arguments as well as his perspective as a whole in their writings, when presenting their own current doctrinal and political struggles.³⁶ Through the reception of these first-hand-informed authors,³⁷ the next generations of chroniclers, like Sulpicius Severus, and church historians, like Rufinus of Aquileia,³⁸ integrated a filtered, but clearly pro-Atha-

³⁶ The reception of Athanasius' works by his Latin contemporaries in the 4th century has no current systematic investigation. In the case of Hilary, it is at least plausible that he got to know Athanasius' works in his Eastern exile just as he was well informed about the theological debates in the East, which he demonstrated by his collection of documents (now called *Collectanea antianiana Parisina*; see AW III/1 3, Dok. 43). There have been great efforts to clarify the relationship between the text version transmitted by Hilary and those transmitted in Athanasius' works, especially for the Western synod of Serdica; see Wintjes 2010. According to this state of investigation, Hilary did not draw the documents he collected from Athanasius' works directly, but in case of the documents of Serdica 343 from a common Greek source (Wintjes 2010, p. 115–116; in case of the later original Latin documents which Hilary presented in his collection, we do not have the same reason to compare with Athanasius' Greek translations). This would offer no positive argument for Hilary's reading of Athanasius' works. But at the moment for me it is still an open question whether the differences between Athanasius' Greek version of Dok. 43.1 and the supposed Greek model Hilary used could also be explained by Hilary's use of a corrupted Athanasius-copy instead of a separate Dok. 43.1-copy. However, even if this were not the case, Hilary's 'documentation' of the Athanasius-case around Serdica could be read as a new apology for Athanasius given its tendency. Furthermore, Hilary continued *pro Athanasio* to blame the opponents of the Alexandrian, Valens and Ursacius, generally as 'Arians' and enemies of the true faith (as did Athanasius). Hilary employed this rhetorical strategy even when he was arguing for his own theological position, which was rather homoiousian, and not identical with Athanasius' insistence on consubstantiality between the father and the son.

³⁷ Even if one is skeptical about the direct reading of Athanasius' works by Hilary and other Western theologians, these were still involved enough in the actions surrounding the Alexandrian to give a vivid, though one-sided impression to their recipients. It should be clear in this context, that to be informed first-hand does not guarantee neutral authenticity, but suggests for our understanding a witness close enough to the events to produce texts with wide impact on the next generation of writers.

³⁸ In addition to the use of the church history of Gelasius of Caesarea, Rufinus seems to have read at least Athanasius' *Tomus ad Antiochenos* himself; cf. Müller 2015, p. 123 n. 62. His work thus marks a borderline between the independent combination of elements from Athanasius' works and from other sources (including own experiences with contemporaries) on the one hand and the repetition of previous accounts in later centuries on the other.

nasian view in their works on the doctrinal controversies of the 4th century. In these texts (written after the victory of the (Neo-) Nicene position) Athanasius was the great hero, who kept to the truth whatever the cost. As a result, it seems that there was no widespread biography of Athanasius like the one he had written himself on Antony. Instead, as I have shown elsewhere, the figure of Athanasius was integrated in the general descriptions of church histories and chronicles – but in such a way that the description of his life could nearly *replace* a broader presentation of church historical events and their causes (which is especially true in the church history of Rufinus of Aquileia).³⁹ The attractiveness of this approach lay in the possibility to focus a complex doctrinal development in the story of a single hero. Perhaps this made the important but complex developments of the fourth century more comprehensible to a wide audience uneducated in the finer points of the history. Thus, it is plausible that in the absence of a widespread *Vita Athanasii* in traditional terms,⁴⁰ the ‘substitute’ was better than any *vita* could be. One could skip reading the *vitae* of other saints in favour of an overall church history of the fourth century, like that of Rufinus, but it was impossible to be informed about this history without knowing the life of Athanasius, because his life was the (hi)story.

³⁹ See Müller 2015, p. 130–131.

⁴⁰ To be exact, there had been a *Historia Athanasii*, which is commonly called *Historia acephala*, because the text's beginning is lost (see Gemeinhardt 2011b, p. 377); I skip the late *Vitae Athanasii* here, to which Berschin 1978, p. 234, n. 4, has pointed. As far as I see at the moment, they take their material mainly from the late antique church historians, on whom I have focused here; they merit their own investigation, when aspects about their late antique sources become clearer. If my impression is correct, this group of authors represent not so much a new picture of Athanasius, but underline the impact of Rufinus and others on the reception of Athanasius. The raw Latin translation of a lost Greek original studied by Berschin is only extant in the 8th century Codex Veronensis LX; cf. Müller 2010, p. 23–24 with further literature. It may have corroborated the apologetic tendencies of works like that of Hilary, since it reported the actions against Athanasius in a clear pro-Athanasian perspective and was (in its original form) probably written during Athanasius' lifetime and under his direction in Alexandria (if Eduard Schwartz is right – cf. the details with literature in Müller 2010, p. 23–24). But as a humble *historia* it lacked the glorifying qualities of a well-written *vita*. And in respect of its little dissemination in only one manuscript it seems probable that it was not known widely enough to shape Athanasius' authority as a Nicene hero.

The secret of success, ‘Lead a fabulous life’, could thus be continued with ‘such that you become an integral part of historical description (in the leading, i.e. orthodox view on history)’. However, this is only one part of this story. Simultaneously with the later neo-Nicene historiography, the schismatic group of the so-called Luciferians wrote their own history of the Arian controversy.⁴¹ To substantiate their sometimes venturesome constructions of the past, one of them had written two letters under the name of Athanasius,⁴² in which ‘he’ praised Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari on Sardinia, a schismatic and conservative Nicene, as the real champion of orthodoxy.⁴³ The motif of the hunted righteous is used here, when ‘Athanasius’ complains about his enemies who hinder him to see his old parents by chasing him,⁴⁴ but the real aim of these texts is to transfer the authority of suffering Athanasius to the hero of the schismatic group, Lucifer. Interestingly, it was Lucifer, who had become a problem for the historical Athanasius from 362 onwards, when he refused to accept a compromise after years of struggles which had divided the church.⁴⁵

Later, in the 9th century, as a part of the great forgery enterprise of the Pseudo-Isidorian decretals, someone composed a series of letters, in which ‘Athanasius’ wrote to nearly all con-

⁴¹ According to the context in which it was written, this work by the Luciferians Faustinus and Marcellinus is normally called *Libellus precum*; cf. for details, the text and further literature the edition of Canellis (Faustinus Luciferianus & Marcellinus Presbyter 2006).

⁴² For these *Epistulae Athanasii ad Luciferum* cf. Müller 2010, p. 18–19. They have to be written before the *Libellus precum*, since the allusion in *lib. prec.* 24 obviously means these letters.

⁴³ This is all the more interesting since Lucifer himself had praised Athanasius in his *De Athanasio*, which was written in exile. Thus in the alleged time of the letter of ‘Athanasius’ to Lucifer, *Lucifer* was the one who praised the other as a hero of faith.

⁴⁴ For the short text see the edition of Diercks (Lucifer Calaritanus 1978).

⁴⁵ Lucifer and the schism called by his name have attracted some interest in the last years; cf. Pérez Mas 2008, who investigates the relevant sources. Despite these efforts I am not convinced that the definition problem (‘What is a Luciferian?’) and the literary problem (‘Which of the extant text are Luciferian/of Luciferans?’) are solved satisfyingly. This pertains especially to some texts of the Latin Athanasius and thus I hope to improve the state of the discussion in my dissertation. For the moment, I have to limit myself to some preliminary hints in 4.

temporary Roman bishops about the violence of his enemies and the decisions of the council of Nicea.⁴⁶ For a long time it was seen that the intention of these forged letters was to prove the authenticity of 50 or more canons which the council of Nicea in 325 allegedly had set up. These 'canons' liberated the bishops from the power of the metropolitan bishops and considered the bishop of Rome as their only judge. But Athanasius was not only a good 'witness', since he lived at the right time to prove the authenticity of the canons: he was also himself accused by evil and powerful enemies, and suffered unjust pains – just as some Frankish bishops experienced in their own situation. Construed in this way, Athanasius became a role model for those who decided to resist evil (metropolitan) bishops. Since their power was ultimately based on the patronage of the Frankish king with his mundane interests, the statement was also political – also here in seeming parallel to Athanasius, who depicted his 'orthodox' fight in contrast to the 'mundane' policy of emperor Constantius II. That the historical Athanasius, himself a 'papas', never had the idea that the bishop of Rome really was the master-in-chief, seemed less important, particularly since he had no problem in honoring a Roman bishop whenever it seemed helpful to him.⁴⁷

To conclude: a second key feature of the secret to success is the capacity for others in various historical situations to find meaning in the narrative patterns of a life which disclose moments that inspire spiritual imitation. In this case it mainly concerns experiences and moments from the context of persecution for orthodox confession. As the examples of the 'Latin Athanasius' show, for others it was not important to imitate the actions which took place in this life, but to find a starting-point or a *tertium comparationis* by which an element of the fabulous life explained the course of events in their own situation. Therefore the aim of this venture could differ. Rufinus and Sulpicius found in Athanasius' struggle the key event by which an important

⁴⁶ Cf. for the following the summary in Müller 2010, p. 29–31; as far as I see, the edition project of the false decretals has not been completed until now.

⁴⁷ *Inter alia*, Athanasius' success in his second Western exile depended in some respect on the support by Julius of Rome. The alliance with the Roman see became crucial for important phases in his life; cf. Georges 2011.

part of the past could not only be described but also interpreted for the present;⁴⁸ the pseudo-Isidorian forgerers saw themselves as the new Athanasius for a different time. By interpreting significant moments from their own life in the light of Athanasius', they simultaneously expanded the impact which this life had on future generations.

4. *Standing on the right side of doctrine*

In the cases described above, Athanasius' authority is only understandable in the light of his being the champion of the doctrinal side that ultimately won the day. A closer look at the development of his theological position reveals, however, that this was not the result of a never changing attitude, but of some deliberate and timely changes in the articulation of his theology.⁴⁹ Only the later orthodox view on the events saw Athanasius as the unchangeable 'pillar of truth'. However, one should not deny some important constants in this process. With the victory of Nicene doctrine, Athanasius became this 'pillar of truth', as demonstrated above, by the reputation of his holy life and works. Further, his texts are easy to understand, often because he clearly labels all those who are against him or potentially take different stances on doctrine as 'Arians'.⁵⁰ By keeping this construct of a coherent front of doctrinal enemies, Athanasius gave his readers reason to believe that all ways except his own would sooner or later lead into Arianism.

In contrast to later Greek theologians like Gregory of Nyssa or Basil of Caesarea, Athanasius probably wrote some of his important treatises in or for the Latin West. Perhaps he wrote his two volume apologetic work *Contra gentes/De incarnatione* during his first exile in Trier;⁵¹ he probably wrote his *Orationes*

⁴⁸ As I have pointed out in Müller 2015, p. 125–126.131, Rufinus' 'Heldengeschichte' should give hope to the inhabitants of sieged Aquileia.

⁴⁹ After harsh critique on Athanasius because of this fact in former scholarship, the judgement of the 'Kirchenpolitiker' is now more balanced; see Gemeinhardt 2011c.

⁵⁰ For this rhetoric strategy of Athanasius see e.g. Portmann 2011, p. 187.

⁵¹ For the wide range of datings in the actual discussion see Heil 2011, p. 166–168; the dating into the first exile, suggested by Schwartz & Kanengieser, remains somewhat hypothetical, since direct hints are lacking.

contra Arianos during his second exile in Rome and Northern Italy;⁵² and in his later years he sent his *Epistula ad Afros* to the North African bishops defending the creed of Nicaea as the only measure of orthodox faith.⁵³ Additionally, some of his famous *Festal Letters* were sent from his Roman exile.⁵⁴ Interestingly, of these writings the *Epistula ad Afros* is the only one of which an ancient Latin translation is extant,⁵⁵ while the other important works apparently found no direct reception at all in the Latin West.⁵⁶

More importantly, though, Athanasius' terminology of heresy as well as some of his basic exegetic strategies soon became useful weapons in the Latin Nicene struggles against Homoian adversaries. And in fact 'Athanasius' picked up the pen again to compose a work *De trinitate*. This *De trinitate* no doubt worked as a stimulus for further productions of similar texts under Athanasius' name. Possibly the author of *De trinitate* I–VII used the *Epistula ad Afros*, since both texts share a significant set of biblical quotations.⁵⁷ But the Latin Pseudo–Athanasian *De trinitate* clearly aimed at issues in the Western church. This text is significant: it can be seen as the starting-point for a specific Western process of integrating the Alexandrian bishop into a kind of traditional theological canon.⁵⁸ In the 7th century, this will culminate in the

⁵² See the overview by Vinzent 2011 for the (now partly solved) problems of an exact dating and further literature.

⁵³ For the context, dating and text of the *Epistula ad Afros* see the edition with comments by von Stockhausen 2002.

⁵⁴ The transmission of the extant *Festal Letters* is complex and leads to some problems in dating the single letters. The actual state of research is described by Camplani 2011, who p. 280 locates *ep. fest.* 3 in the year 342, i.e. in Rome.

⁵⁵ Cf. Müller 2010, p. 22.

⁵⁶ For the problem of Athanasius' reception by Latin contemporaries see note 36.

⁵⁷ The *Libri De trinitate* need further investigation, some of which is intended for my dissertation. In any case, it is interesting to note the similar set of biblical 'proof texts' in *trin.* V, 36–40 and *Ep. Afr.* 3. See for the moment Müller 2010, p. 19–21, and Müller 2012, p. 28–29, n. 38.

⁵⁸ It will be a future task to describe more exactly the relationship between tr. I–VII and the other *Libri de trinitate*. For the moment I am convinced that a literary dependency of *trin.* X on *trin.* I–VII can be shown, which would mean that the 'Latin Athanasius' in parts grew out of himself; cf. Müller 2012, p. 29, n. 38. One line of this development led to the Athanasian Creed, see the next note.

composition of the so-called ‘Athanasian’ Creed, a compilation which combines extracts from Augustine and others, including the *filioque*, but not without parallels to the *De trinitate* of Ps.-Athanasius as well.⁵⁹

In sum, Athanasius became a clearly shaped doctrinal authority in the West by a set of texts which were for the lion’s share not his, but corresponded in some respect to the methods by which he combatted non-Nicene trajectories. This rather vague, but at the same time comprehensible picture of Athanasius may explain the attractiveness of producing texts under his name. His dogmatic profile was clearly sufficient to advocate any ‘Nicene’ attempts to fight ‘Arian’ errors, not only in the fourth century but also later ones, such as those present in the Vandal and Visigothic kingdoms.

Of course, the theological standpoint advocated by the ruling class in these kingdoms was not really Arian, but Homoian. Yet, the original Athanasian tendency to label every substantial subordination of the Son under the Father as ‘Arian’ worked here for later ‘Nicens’, too. This was all the more possible since some basic Homoian accusations against the idea of consubstantiality of Father and Son originated during Athanasius’ lifetime. Besides all shifts in the discussion about trinitarian theology, the quite biblicistic base of Homoian thinking led to some constants in dogmatic controversies from the fourth to the fifth century, e.g. the Homoian criticism that the crucial term *substantia* was not written in the Holy Scriptures. From this point of view, it is interesting to note that Uta Heil has pointed to a possible use of Athanasius’ *Epistula ad Afros* (probably in the form of a Latin translation!?) by the composers of the co-called *Liber fidei catholicae* which was prepared by some Catholic attendants of the debate between Homoians and Nicens in 484 at Carthage ordered by the Vandal king. The letter by which Athanasius had claimed the

⁵⁹ I have tried to show some concrete parallels between clauses in the pseudo-Athanasian *Libri de trinitate* and the *Fides Athanasii* (‘Quicumque’) in Müller 2012. Drecoll has disagreed (see note 11), eager to focus on writers in the Augustinian tradition as the probable sources of the creed. This concept is generally plausible, but has to explain the alleged Athanasian authorship as disparate from the Latin Athanasian tradition.

sufficiency of the Nicene Creed would have served as an authoritative source for the claim that there was indeed some biblical evidence for *substantia* more than a hundred years later.⁶⁰ Also in Visigothic Spain, the kings until Reccared were not Arians but Homoians. But Reccared's conversion to the Catholic faith was celebrated as a turn from the old heresy of Constantine's time to Nicene orthodoxy. Possibly, the 'Athanasian Creed' should serve as a kind of catechism, teaching the converted people the true faith. Being an 'Athanasian' work, the text would have insinuated a doctrinal change in the light of fourth century role-models, making the converts part of the 'anti-Arian' tradition established by the Alexandrian.⁶¹

If one considers the examples presented here and in a former article, the possibility to advocate different dogmatic positions by the label 'Athanasius' (as long as they could count as 'Nicene') made him an *integrative figure* for various trinitarian concepts. Old-Nicene Luciferians as well as Latin Neo-Nicenes claimed his authority against the 'integrating enemy', the 'Arians'.⁶²

Before concluding the study, a short look at the decline of the 'virtual authority' whose traces have been followed in the previous sections, is necessary.

⁶⁰ For the situation in Vandal North Africa and the possible role of the *Epistula ad Afros* in it cf. Heil 2011b, p. 251–252.261–263. The situation would be even more intriguing if my supposition would be right that the set of biblical 'proof texts' for *substantia* in the *liber fidei catholicae* would not originate from the original Athanasian *Epistula ad Afros* but from the Pseudo-Athanasian *De trinitate*; for the possible connection between these texts by a specific set of biblical passages cf. note 57.

⁶¹ I have hesitantly suggested the conversion of Reccared as context of the composition of the Athanasian Creed in Müller 2012.

⁶² At the previous LECTIO conference I have presented some considerations about the Pseudo-Athanasian *De trinitate* XI, for which a Luciferian background can be made probable (Müller 2016). Contrary to this case, I am not convinced that *De trinitate* I–VII is a Luciferian work. Instead, my investigations on this text led me to the impression that its trinitarian concept could be called (if hesitantly) Neo-Nicene – in the wide sense, that it shows attempts to improve older Nicene ideas (inter alia the full integration of the holy spirit as an equal third person). Further research needs to be done here. For the moment further discussion of the issues is in Kwon 2011; his analyse of the the trinitarian theology of the work is often in line with the impression I have given here, although he seems to be wrong in ascribing it to Spanish Luciferians by unsatisfying reasons.

5. *The decline of the ‘Latin Athanasius’ and parallels in other Christian cultures*

When the reliefs at Trier were made, the heydays of the Latin Athanasius were nearly over. Since the time of the Humanists, questions of authenticity accompanied the attempts to produce (more or less) critical editions of ancient texts. The still impressive edition of Athanasius’ works by Gerard de Montfaucon, which is reprinted in Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca*, relegated most of the Latin texts under his name to the *dubia et spuria*-volume, which almost ‘physically’ separated the pseudepigraphic texts from their source of authority.⁶³ Thus, with the 17th century, after about a century of rather isolated doubts about the authenticity of single texts, a harsh decline of the whole construct ‘Latin Athanasius’ had happened. In the further history of research these texts were often even ignored as sources for the history of Christianity.⁶⁴

The story of the long-lasting rise and the rather quick decline of this authority was constructed by a group of texts and their reception. Thus the reception or non-reception of these texts can be seen as the crucial categories for the rise and decline of a ‘text-based’ authority. It is important to bear in mind, also, that there are other sets of texts under the name of Athanasius in other languages and in other Christian cultures, and thus other authorities. There are indeed Syriac, Armenian, Coptic – and of course, Greek – Athanasius corpora, each time authentic as well as pseudepigraphic texts, and each of these differ in the

⁶³ See the division in PG 26–27 and 28 respectively. It is important to notice that many judgements about authenticity by de Montfaucon have never been reassessed since his edition, and are thus based on the state of scholarship in the late 17th century. Although this present article examines pseudepigraphic texts in order to include them in a future (and better) history of Christian literature, it has to be emphasised that future scholarship in the historical Athanasius has to make a systematic reassessment of de Montfaucons judgements.

⁶⁴ The only major exception are cases in which the suppositions of spuriousness were combined with the ascription to another famous theologians like Marcellus of Ancyra (cf. e.g. the discussion about the authorship of the *Sermo maior de fide* and the related *Sermo minor* described in Müller 2016, with hints about further literature). It should go without saying that this focused approach has to skip a lot of potential source material, which is disturbing, given the fact that our sources for the history of late antique Christianity are rather limited.

nature of their theologies and ascetic narratives. The 'Armenian Athanasius', for example, is represented by a set of texts addressing, *inter alia*, liturgical issues.⁶⁵ This turned Athanasius into the father of liturgy in the Armenian tradition, while this feature is completely absent in the Latin corpus, which is mainly concerned with questions of trinitarian and christological doctrine on the one hand, and with monasticism and hagiography on the other.⁶⁶

Here we find a special feature of translating authorities into foreign literature. Our study has shown a case of authority shaping which assimilates the moral and doctrinal concerns of an ancient life into several distinct phases of the target (in our case: Latin) culture for the purpose of constructing identity in reference to the orthodoxy of the past. In this perspective, the case of Athanasius demonstrates that such processes of assimilation require a certain balance of (more or less) authentic base (1) and 'innovative ability' (2) to be successful: (1) Each of the three secrets of success presented here had its starting point in aspects of the historical Athanasius' life and/or works. Of course, the power of these aspects was not based on strict authenticity just like the *Vita Antonii* is not a precise biography in modern terms. But the person of Athanasius offered distinctive features which made it possible to accept him as an authority, while others failed in this respect. Such features may thus help to explain why a person became the initial nucleus for a growing pseudepigraphic literature. A quite extensive self-propaganda by Athanasius should be considered in this context as a bridge from the church historical events themselves to later hagiographical descriptions of his achievements as well as to later understandings of his dogmatic position. (2) On the other hand, the authoritative figure that emerged, had to be 'open' to some changes which were necessary to integrate this figure into the target culture. In other words: If Athanasius had been, for example, a hermit, being venerated for keeping silence and isolation from the world as long as he lived, it would have been implausible to use his name

⁶⁵ The 'Armenian Athanasius' is now easily accessible by the groundbreaking work of Avagyan 2014.

⁶⁶ See the conclusion in Müller 2010, p. 34.

for pseudepigraphic works against heretics. Athanasius' integration into new, non-Greek cultures was possible because he was known as the author of texts which dealt with major topics that remained relevant in later times and in the new cultures, too. Some of these originated in the fourth century, especially monasticism and trinitarian doctrine (with some hints to upcoming Christological issues). The long-lasting interests in these topics made some of Athanasius' own works worth a translation in other languages for centuries, but his reputation as an authority for such issues also offered the possibility to add further texts to his alleged oeuvre. As shown above, 'Athanasian' dealing with heretical positions was adoptable and thus open for such updates. Once the process of assimilation had started successfully, not only the addition of new texts to the existing corpus,⁶⁷ but also the addition of new topics would be easier to accept: Being an established authority in the new cultural context, 'Athanasius' could be an attractive patron for e.g. liturgical concepts, too. The relative openness of the 'Athanasius'-figure for assimilation processes may be also due to the fact, that numerous and various Greek Pseudo-Athanasian texts emerged during the centuries.⁶⁸ As a consequence, the variety of topics related with Athanasius in the original culture grew and may have forced the impression that the Alexandrian was an authority for a wide range of theological questions. It will be a question for further research whether the picture of 'Athanasius' in the different non-Greek cultures is shaped more precisely than in Greek culture.

The way every culture shaped its 'own' Athanasius tells about specific needs in the construction of the own identity. The Catholics in the Latin West for example, being confronted with struggles about trinitarian doctrine in the Germanic kingdoms for centuries, used Athanasius' name to advocate their position as orthodox and to distinguish themselves from their dogmatic enemies by labelling them as 'Arians'. Analogous needs may be

⁶⁷ Cf. note 58 for the growth of the Pseudo-Athanasian *De trinitate*-complex.

⁶⁸ Cf. the great number of texts and topics classified by the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol. II.

detected in the abovementioned monastic writings transmitted under Athanasius' name.

However, it should be noticed that the pre-modern times in which the Latin Athanasius rose were not unaware of the concepts of authenticity and forgery.⁶⁹ New and decisive for the change from the 15th century onwards was a historical critical, *scholarly* view on the texts as individual units. In contrast to the former process of inculturation, the implicit or explicit connection of the literary unities, which supported the impression of authenticity, disappeared. The isolation of the texts made them easy victims for attacks by scholarly critique. Moreover, this process split up the set of texts which constituted the identity of the 'Latin Athanasius'.

6. Conclusions

By trying to present an outline of the complex developments which made Athanasius of Alexandria a kind of Western church father I have described three secrets of success. In all three cases, the most important framework of source material is the historical Athanasius: his way of life, his literary production, and his suggestive style. Thus Athanasius himself began to shape his own authority. But were it not for a rich transmission history, his life and work would probably have had limited success in the Latin West, since the Alexandrian was obviously focused on Eastern Greek audiences. His festal letters show that even while in exile he saw his main audience as those in his homeland, and the little number of Latin translations of his authentic works as well as the analogous number of quotations seem to confirm that the majority of Western clerics reacted to their own contexts.⁷⁰

The decisive shaping of Athanasius' Latin authority was thus initiated by others. Within a few decades after his death Athanasius was present in the West in the form of a free translation of his *Vita Antonii* (preceded by a literal one), letters to Lucifer of Cagliari, an influential dialogue *De trinitate* and some other texts, whose number grew over time. Every new text reshaped

⁶⁹ This is one of the main results of Speyer 1971, with a lot of examples.

⁷⁰ See above note 35.

the framework of Athanasius' authority. It is remarkable that later authors of pseudepigraphic 'Athanasian' texts used his authority for their own interests, but always tried, as it seems, to preserve the outline of features which the authority of Athanasius had in the West from the very beginning: Still in the fourth century Athanasius had been established in the Latin West as an authority primarily in questions on monasticism and trinitarian (plus Christological) doctrine. His way of life had been recognized as corresponding with his teaching. The authors of the *Libri De trinitate* as well as the compiler of the Athanasian Creed followed the 'anti-Arian' line, while from the Latin translations of the *Vita Antonii* onwards, every new Latin monastic text under Athanasius' name took its authority (and plausibility) from the Alexandrian's masterpiece – mostly in form of Evagrius' translation. It goes without saying that all the 're-shapers' derived their own advantages from fashioning their work under the epithet of Athanasius. Further research on the individual texts which shaped the framework of Athanasius' Latin authority will enable us to say more about how these works influenced church history.

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Abstract

This article investigates the development of the auctoritas of Athanasius of Alexandria in the Western Latin tradition. Going through different categories of sources, this research brings to light the secrets of his long-lasting success: Athanasius wrote a 'bestseller' (the Vita Antonii); he led an illustrious life, so that his biography became part of the core of Nicene church history and soon became legend; he propagated central doctrines in a way which seemed applicable to the tensions in everyday life throughout the Western middle ages.

All these reasons made the production of texts under his name attractive. Since these phenomena intertwined with each other even in the form of literary dependencies, the 'Latin Athanasius' (although a construct) can be revisited as quite a coherent 'figure' in the Western Christian discourse of authority. The decline of this figure at the beginning of historical criticism shows that this authority was confined to a specific pre-modern Western development.

DAVID DEFRIES

WONDER, MIRROR NEURONS AND EMBODIED COGNITION IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL EXPERIENCE OF MIRACLES

1. *Introduction*

If scholars want to understand authority, and in particular, ‘the mechanisms and strategies by which participants in intellectual life at large have shaped the authority of historical persons’, it helps to begin by recognizing how often they themselves have shaped authority by exaggerating its impacts.¹ Scholars frequently write using synecdoches in which an authority figure stands in for a group of people. For example, one textbook about the history of Western Civilization, states

Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE) changed the course of history by conquering the Persian Empire, leading an army of Greeks and Macedonians to the border of India, taking Near Easterners into his army and imperial administration and planting colonies of Greeks as far east as Afghanistan.²

Taken literally, the statement is nonsensical: Alexander did none of these things single-handedly. Although one might argue that he made the most important individual contributions to these efforts, hundreds of thousands of troops chose to do most of the fighting, thousands of lieutenants the bulk of the leading, thousands of bureaucrats the actual inductions and countless Greek emigrants the real work of founding colonies. The passage

¹ Call for Papers: Shaping Authority Conference, 5–6 December 2013.

² Hunt 2013, p. 109–110.

distorts the nature of authority. Like the authoritarian version of the body-politic metaphor that compares a leader to the head of a body and followers to the body's organs and limbs, the sentence assumes obedience to a leader's command is automatic.³ In reality, authority is fundamentally a right to be heard, not a guarantee of obedience. Something, and not necessarily the authority figure, must convince audiences to accept a command or judgment.

Similar distortions appear in modern discussions of miracles in the West during the early Middle Ages (c. 500–1100).⁴ The crucial issue is the nature of the relationship between the educated monks who composed thousands of miracle accounts and the many people who participated in the Christian cult of the saints. In response to the way positivist historians discarded the miraculous in medieval texts, recent scholars have tried to redeem the texts by studying what people believed. Some have approached miracle accounts as evidence for medieval *mentalités*. Others have treated narratives as 'social constructions' that are true for the society that produces them. Since the Linguistic Turn, it has also become common to use approaches derived from semiotics via anthropology to analyze miracle accounts. In these latter analyses, scholars treat miracle accounts as 'semiotic entities' in which signifiers refer to abstract signifieds, especially religious norms the monks wished to promote like virginity or charity.⁵ However, in redeeming miracle accounts, scholars sent them to purgatory, not heaven. Their approaches have exhibited a 'hypercephalism', a focus on a world putatively imagined in people's minds to the exclusion of a world sensed by their bodies. Bracketing questions of truth, scholars sidestep questions about how authors convinced believers that witnesses experienced what modern scholars themselves believe they could not have experienced. As

³ Musolf 2010, p. 26.

⁴ Although scholars usually date the early Middle Ages from roughly 500 until 1000, this essay treats the eleventh century as early medieval in recognition of the monastic intellectual culture that was dominant between 500 and 1100.

⁵ The term 'semiotic entities' is found in Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, who apply it to miracle narratives about St. Foy, which they also label as 'rhetorical structures (a set of internally related signs), as historically contingent constellations of signs, and as sign systems designed to have historical agency (Ashley & Sheingorn 1999, p. 20).

Stephan Justice trenchantly observes, these approaches treat faith as a ‘black box’, impenetrable to modern understanding.⁶

Recent developments in cognitive science suggest that ironically, a persistent mind-body dualism in Western culture is at the root of the problem. Wonder in the context of a Platonic metaphysic created early medieval miracles. Where modern scholars have tried to understand miracles in terms of subjective feelings generated by perceptions of objective, physical events, early medieval believers described them as generated by a separate, spiritual realm. In addition, scholars have traditionally assumed people who experience wonder can only relate the abstract concept of their mental state to others: minds communicate via signs linked to abstract signifieds; bodies are isolated. However, recent studies indicate the cognitive experience of wonder involves both the body and the mind. Most humans have a neurological apparatus that gives them access to the minds of other people. This means that audiences knew the wonder of other people without elaborate semiotic codes or logocentric decipherment.

The same scientific findings also challenge assumptions about monastic authority over miracles. Because written and oral accounts can transmit witnesses’ original feelings of wonder, not just the abstract idea of wonder, it was witnesses who were the real authorities. Most of these witnesses were people Axel Rüth has aptly referred to as ‘nobodies’ in early medieval society.⁷ Monastic influence on miracles was largely indirect. As exegetes and liturgical experts, monks primed Christians to perceive certain events as miracles, but were not directly authorities unless they themselves witnessed a miracle. In addition, monks would have been most effective in their roles when they strongly believed what they reported.

2. *Wonders*

The cult of the saints was one of the most important elements of early medieval society. Elites, including emperors and kings, donated vast tracts of land to monasteries in the name of the

⁶ Justice 2008, p. 2.

⁷ Rüth 2011, p. S113.

saints whose shrines the communities housed.⁸ Communities built expensive pilgrimage churches, modifying the norms of ecclesiastical architecture to accommodate visitors to shrines.⁹ They also devoted countless hours and great stacks of costly parchment to texts about saints. Much of what early medieval authors wrote about saints concerns miracles. Saints were holy elites who entered the court of the heavenly king directly after death. In parallel with the elites in the courts of mortal kings, they could petition God on behalf of supplicants. If a saint was willing to hear a petition and effective, he or she delivered heavenly benefits, such as miraculous cures, to the supplicant or punishments, such as miraculous paralysis and even death, to a supplicant's enemies (however, both medieval authors and modern scholars regularly discuss miracles as acts performed by the saints themselves rather than God).

The early medieval concept of a miracle embraced a wider variety of events than the late medieval or modern concept. In the twelfth century, theologians began whittling away at it by differentiating between wonderful events that occur according to nature or by human artifice and wonderful events that occur against the normal operation of nature or *contra naturam*. Eventually, late medieval intellectuals regarded only events *contra naturam* as true miracles. By contrast, in the early Middle Ages, people believed miracles took place *praeter* or *supra naturam* ('alongside' or 'in addition to the course of natural events'). A miracle could be almost any event, as long as witnesses experienced wonder.¹⁰ The variety of miraculous events is evident in early medieval terminology. The New Testament describes miracles variously 'as "signs" (*semeia*), "wonders" (*terata*), "mighty works" (*dunameis*) and, on occasion, simply "works" (*erga*)'.¹¹ Early medieval authors adopted these categories as *signa*, *miracula* or *mirabilia*, *virtutes* and *gesta*, respectively. The following three accounts illustrate the

⁸ For example, several great abbeys in the north of France each controlled roughly 100,000 ha (247,105 acres) of land in the ninth century (Derville 1999, p. 26).

⁹ Palazzo 2010, p. 99–109.

¹⁰ Ward 1982, p. 1–19; Bynum 1997, p. 7–10; Herbers 2005, p. 14–17; R  th 2011, p. S92–94.

¹¹ Harrison 2006, p. 493.

spectrum of events simultaneously considered miraculous in the early medieval West – here, in early medieval Flemish society.

The *Historia miraculorum in circumlatione per Flandriam* (*History of the miracles during the Journey through Flanders*) states that in 1060, the monks of Lobbes (prov. Hainaut, Belgium) went on a tour of Flanders with the relics of Ursmer (d. 713), their chief patron saint, covering 570 km and pacifying many feuds.¹² The text relates a particularly dramatic miracle that occurred at Lissewege (prov. West-Vlaanderen, Belgium).¹³ There, a man prostrated himself before a young lord, named Robert, the leader of almost two hundred knights, and begged forgiveness for killing Robert's two brothers (also knights). Grief struck Robert so that he resisted when the monks supported the prostrate man's plea. The monks then placed Ursmer's reliquary on the ground. Robert immediately threw himself down as well, but did not forgive the killer. A standoff (lie-down?) ensued: 'Prostrati ibi erant tres simili et dissimili modo: sanctus Ursmarus quasi ueniam petens pro reo, reus pro semet ipso, iuuenis apud sanctum (So now three lay there, all prostrate alike and yet not at all alike: St. Ursmer, as if begging pardon for the guilty man; the guilty man begging pardon for himself; and the youth prostrate before the saint)'.¹⁴ After three hours, Ursmer ended the feud by spewing smoke from his reliquary and causing it to levitate, a deed which terrified Robert into submission.

The *Vitae ss. Audomari, Bertini, Winnoci* (*Lives of Ss. Omer, Bertin and Winnoc*) claims that at some point between 720 and 740, an unnamed man traveled to the church at Wormhout (départ. Nord, France).¹⁵ For a long time, he had been lame and suffered from a trembling in his head, hands and voice, which exhausted him. He was drawn to the church by the shrine of a local saint, named Winnoc (d. 717), who had governed a small community of monks there. The man arrived on Easter Sunday and began praying while the monks sang the night office of Nocturns, one

¹² Sigal 1976, p. 78–81; Koziol 1992, p. 239–258, map on p. 242.

¹³ *Historia miraculorum*, 16, p. 840–841.

¹⁴ *Historia miraculorum*, 3.16, p. 305–306 (trans. Koziol 2000, p. 352).

¹⁵ *Vitae Audomari, Bertini, Winnoci*, iii. 28, p. 775.

of the holiest liturgies of the year. After the monks finished singing and had begun the gospel reading, the man

inmenso lumine circumdatus, duas igneas ex utraque parte suis directas auribus uidit sagittas. Statimque una per eius dexteram intrante auriculum, altera uero per sinistram, subito per sui capitis foramina immensa sanguinis abundantia fluxit

surrounded by a great light, saw two fiery arrows shoot into his ears on both sides. [With] one [arrow] entering through his right ear, the other through his left, suddenly a great abundance of blood flowed through the holes of his head.¹⁶

The man felt his health return. Filled with joy, he leapt up and ran around the church, giving thanks to God and Winnoc. Then, he told the monks what had happened. A crowd sang both God's and Winnoc's praises as he exited the church.

Finally, the *Historia translationis s. Lewinnae* (*History of the Translation of St. Lewinna*) reports that in 1058, a monk, named Balger, from Bergues (dép. Nord, France) stole the relics of an obscure martyr and virgin, named Lewinna, from a minster in southern England. None of the monks at Bergues or the residents of the surrounding region had ever heard of Lewinna, so the monks decided to take her on a tour of coastal Flanders. When they arrived at the village of Leffinge (prov. West-Vlaanderen, Belgium), their second stop, the people refused to honor Lewinna as a saint because they did not know her. They did, however, allow the monks to put her on the altar of their church, the customary place of honor for visiting saints. One of the monks complained to Lewinna that the villagers were calling the monks liars and arguing she was not, in fact, a saint. He threatened her, telling her that unless she proved her holiness, the monks would venerate her less in the future. He then retired to his room and 'mirum dictu eadem hora contigit (it is wonderful to say what happened in that same hour)': a cross in the church 'aquae sudorem ex se emisit (began to emit a sweat of water)', 'quid futuri signi portentum dicebant (which [bystanders] called the portent of a future sign)'.¹⁷ To fulfill the portent, Lewinna soon healed a lame man.

¹⁶ *Vitae Audomari, Bertini, Winnoci*, iii.28, p. 775.

¹⁷ Drogo, *Historia*, ii.1.53.

From a modern perspective, it is difficult to see how anyone could equate the events above – a levitating reliquary, a miraculous healing, and what was apparently condensation on a cross. However, it was not unusual to see a mixture of spectacular and mundane events in the list of a saint's deeds. Between roughly 740 and 1078, several texts report Winnoc performing numerous miracles.¹⁸ Some were spectacular acts: as an old man, he turned a millstone without touching it; he struck blind, then restored the sight of a monk who spied on him as he turned the millstone; he immobilized his reliquary when the monks of Wormhout tried to move his bones to a different village; he healed the sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf and the paralyzed; he freed a repentant criminal from his irons; he freed a man unjustly seized by a slave trader; he broke the irons of a repentant fratricide; and he exorcized a demon from a man in faraway Hamburg (*Staat Hamburg, Germany*). Several of Winnoc's other miracles seem less wondrous to the modern eye: he preserved his reliquary during a fire; he protected at least seven people who fell from walls during construction on churches dedicated to him; he restored a cup used for the Mass when it appeared cracked; he prevented a lamp in his church from breaking when it fell; he shattered an ax head when a monk tried to use it to break the iron bands around his reliquary; he revealed that some of his relics had accidentally fallen into a monk's cowl; a drought ended after monks processed around local fields with his reliquary; and centuries after his death, he persuaded the count of Flanders to return a property to the abbey of Saint-Amand.

Between the first and the twelfth centuries, Augustine was the most influential exponent of Christian beliefs about miracles. His thinking on the topic, which helps to make sense of the above examples, is scattered across several texts. Fortunately, Benedicta Ward has supplied an excellent summary.¹⁹ According to Augustine, miracles are events that inspire *admiratio* ('wonder') at divine majesty. The logic is relatively simple. Because God created the

¹⁸ The various accounts were compiled in two medieval texts: the anonymous *Vita secunda s. Winnoci* (BHL 8954, 8955) and Drogo of Saint-Winnoc's *Liber miraculorum s. Winnoci* (BHL 8956).

¹⁹ Ward 1982, p. 3–4.

entire universe, whatever God wills is natural. God wills miracles to demonstrate his own majesty. Therefore, miracles are natural. In fact, strictly speaking, the only real miracle is the creation itself. Unfortunately, humans become jaded with the quotidian, so during the creation, God planted the seeds of singular events *praeter naturam*. To be sure, what provokes *admiratio* in the educated differs from what provokes it in the average person, but wonder is the common denominator. A miracle depends not on an event's violation of natural laws but on the way it strikes witnesses as bearing meaning from God.

3. *The early medieval hermeneutics of wonder*

Most scholars have analyzed miracles from the late medieval perspective, which links wonder to a material reality. For example, Caroline Bynum defines *admiratio* 'as cognitive, non-appropriative, perspectival, and particular'.²⁰ In her definition, wonder results from an inability to contain material phenomena within normal categories of thought. She discusses it in the context of three late medieval discourses.²¹ First, in late medieval university discourse, events were thought to provoke *admiratio* in inverse proportion to an observer's *scientia* (knowledge of the physical world). Knowledgeable people are not as easily amazed as the unlearned. Second, sermons and hagiography opposed *admiratio* to *imitatio* (the imitation of saint's deeds). Here, Bynum points out how religious leaders often urged believers to view a saint's actions as *non imitanda sed admiranda* ('not to be imitated but to be wondered at') because some deeds were beyond the capacities of ordinary believers. Finally, entertainment literature often delighted to speak of physical oddities and paradoxes. In each case, Bynum argues the physical world inspired wonder.

In contrast, the dominant early medieval discourse found the provocations for *admiratio* in an immaterial reality. Most early medieval Christians subscribed to a basic Platonism transmitted by patristic-era intellectuals like Augustine.²² Their cosmology

²⁰ Bynum 1997, p. 3.

²¹ Bynum 1997, p. 6–14.

²² Blumenthal and Markus 1981, p. ix; Stone 2001, p. 253; Ferguson 2003, p. 335.

posited an ontological division in creation. On the one hand is the physical world, which in the present age – the *saeculum* – is material, visible, mutable and temporal. On the other hand is the spiritual world, which is immaterial, invisible, mutable and immortal.²³ God and the governing principles of the universe, which exist in his mind, are spiritual but also immutable.²⁴ As a result of the burden of Original Sin engendered by Adam and Eve, physical substance has the potential to rebel against divine principles.²⁵ Because of this potential, evil sometimes triumphs in the material world, while it is vanquished in the spiritual realm. However, the current state of the physical world is temporary. It will end after the Second Coming of Christ. As a corollary, *scientia* is inferior to the *sapientia* ('wisdom') derived from comprehending divine principles.²⁶

Ancient and early medieval Christian intellectuals never expected to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the universe. Instead, they believed humans must fumble for truth in light of Christ's incarnation and the scriptures but without the perfect understanding that will attend the Second Coming.²⁷ Augustine argued that the mind needs the gift of divine illumination to achieve even glimpses of reality.²⁸ *Admiratio* was both a result and a proof of this illumination. In other words, it was the spiritual world that the mind failed to contain.

Early medieval intellectuals produced little formal philosophy or theology. Instead, most of the evidence for their thinking about miracles is embedded in scriptural commentaries. The prioritization of *sapientia* is evident in the dominant hermeneutic used in these commentaries. This hermeneutic anticipated a literal level about physical events and either two or three allegorical or spiritual levels. When authors identified only two spiritual levels, they distinguished between a 'moral' or 'tropological' level that reveals how divine principles should govern behavior on

²³ Knuuttila 2001, p. 103–105; Mann 2001, p. 41.

²⁴ Marenbon 1983, p. 15; Knuuttila 2001, p. 104–105, 107.

²⁵ Mann 2001, p. 47.

²⁶ Clark 2001, p. 99; Vance 2008, p. 13.

²⁷ De Lubac 1959, I, p. 86.

²⁸ O'Daly 2008, p. 166–167.

earth, and an ‘allegorical’ level that reveals the principles themselves. When authors identified three spiritual levels, they divided the ‘allegorical’ level into ‘anagogy’, which reveals truths about heaven, and ‘analogy’ or ‘typology’, in which a *typos* (‘type’) in the Old Testament serves as a figure for an *anti-typos* (‘anti-type’) in the New Testament, where the *anti-typos* more fully reveals the spiritual meaning of the divine principle.²⁹ While it was important to understand what the literal level revealed about what had happened in the *saeculum*, exegetes directed the overwhelming majority of their energy at allegorical readings about the spiritual world.

Exegetes also applied their hermeneutic to the post-biblical age.³⁰ Unlike many Platonists, the majority of Christians never wholly condemned the material world. Though it might be rebellious, a good and omnipotent God created it. Therefore, not only must it be fundamentally good as well, but God also reveals something of himself in it. These revelations are discernible by human cognition. According to a theory that had near universal acceptance in the ancient and medieval West, there are two types of cognition, each with its own physical locus. Lower-order cognition, which concerns particular physical objects, occurs in the body. Disagreements existed about where the organs responsible for this thinking are located. Following Galen, most placed them in the head. Others, most importantly Aristotle, had them in the heart. The theory also claimed that lower-order cognition is found in many creatures. For example, lower-order cognition explains how spiders can construct geometric webs despite an inability to reason. Higher-order cognition is rational and directed at universal concepts like humanity or justice. Among mortal creatures, only humans have rational capacities. Higher-order cognition takes place in a person’s incorporeal and immortal *spiritus* (‘spirit’), which is distinct from the body and includes the *mens* (‘mind’) and the *anima* and/or *animus* (‘soul’). There are also faculties that connect the spirit and the bodily senses. They allow thought to progress from cor-

²⁹ The classic account of this hermeneutic is de Lubac (1959), but for concise summaries, see Janes 2000, p. 102–113 and van Liere 2011, p. 159–167.

³⁰ De Lubac 1959, II, p. 216–219.

poreal particulars to spiritual universals, from the earthly to the heavenly. These faculties had different names in the different variations of the basic theory. Most commonly, authors referred to them collectively as the *oculi mentis* ('eyes of the mind').³¹

The idea that God is manifest in his creation led to an assimilation of the literal sense of the scriptures to physical events. In both cases, the eyes of the body perceive the *signum* ('sign') – the material *verbum* ('word') or *gestum* ('deed') – and the eyes of the mind discern the *res* ('thing, matter or principle').³² Christian intellectuals used the terms *historia* ('history') and *narratio* ('narrative') to refer both to a text describing events in this world *and* to the events themselves. The material world in which miracles occur became a sort of 'natural scripture' that could be read just like the written ones.³³ People recognize in the events referred to as miracles signs pointing to spiritual truths, even if the truth is only that God is powerful.

The sweating cross at Leffinge provides a straightforward example of a sign. As a *portentum* its significance depended heavily on witnesses' experience of coincidence. The monks' need for a sign of Lewinna's holiness coincided with villagers' skepticism, early medieval preconceptions about saints and the appearance of water on a cross. This wonder adheres to what Peter Turner has described as 'a principle of spontaneity' in late antique Christianity.³⁴ The principle was operative when conditions unexpectedly converged to inspire the perception of sacred significance. Turner gives as one of his examples a story in which the abbot Pachomius was speaking allegorically about five figs hidden in a jar though he did not know that one of his monks had actually stolen five figs and hidden them in a jar. The fortuitous juxtaposition of speech and event struck the thief as wondrous, revealing the spiritual truth of Pachomius's allegory.³⁵

³¹ Kemp & Fletcher 1993, p. 559–565; Gumbrecht 2008, p. 1–9; Vance (2008), p. 13–20.

³² Kirwan 2001, p. 191–193.

³³ De Lubac 1959, II, p. 43–44; Janes 2000, p. 110–111; Van Liere 2011, p. 169.

³⁴ Turner 2012, p. 61.

³⁵ Turner 2012, p. 59–61.

The principle of spontaneity helps us understand one type of stimulus for *admiratio* but not all types. In Turner's principle, desire for a specific miracle cannot be a factor in its perception, apparently excluding miracles sought by people like the sick man at Wormhout. In this case, a different type of subjectivity was at work. It is quite possible the man may have had a long-lasting, but not permanent, condition. Perhaps his health had been improving for some time before he entered the church, making his cure a matter of incremental, not exponential, degree: the sick man's health gradually improved until he suddenly perceived he had been healed. (It is not clear that he actually suffered blood loss – see below – but if he did, as a trope of descriptions of miraculous cures, it might have been what provoked his impression of being healed.) In fact, some accounts actually note beneficiaries were not completely healed or that the healing process continued for some time after the provocation of wonder.³⁶ For example, when Ursmer healed a woman who had been blind for five years, 'profluente ex oculis quasi albugine oui, licet non ex integro, se uidere clamauit (a substance like an egg's albumen ran from her eyes, and she exclaimed that she could see, though not completely)'.³⁷ In the eleventh century, a lame youth lay before the altar of a church dedicated to Winnoc. He felt the saint begin to heal him, and 'post diatim meliusculus coepit esse (afterwards, day by day, he gradually became better)'.³⁸ An ill man sought Lewinna's help, and 'mox coepit canceris ulcus per se minorari [...] Et ita factum est, ut quot diebus paulatim conualesceret, donec integrae sanitati homo totus redderetur (soon his cancerous sore began to diminish by itself [...]) And thus it happened, so that for some few days he recovered, until the entire man was returned to soundness of health'.³⁹ The mixture of these complete and incomplete cures suggests the dramatic terms found in many accounts of spectacular miracles are references

³⁶ André Sigal surveyed 1,102 miracles with chronological indicators: 428 occurred immediately after a petition; 202 occurred on the same day; 191 occurred 1 to 2 days after; 81 occurred 3 to 7 days after; and 146 occurred more than 7 days after (Sigal 1985, p. 69).

³⁷ *Historia miraculorum*, 2.13, p. 304 (trans. Koziol 2000, p. 351).

³⁸ Drogo, *Liber miraculorum sancti Winnoci*, iii.7, p. 278.

³⁹ Drogo, *Historia*, ii.2.62, p. 625.

to how events appeared subjectively to witnesses, not how we might objectively see them today. Such accounts would probably trouble modern audiences less if they used the word *quasi* ('as if') more frequently – 'the sick man saw lights *as if* two fiery arrows entered his ears' or 'the man sensed his health *as if* Win-noc suddenly healed him'. This one small word would preserve both subjective and objective accuracy for us. However, the use of *quasi* in this way would not have conveyed the implicit statement of belief in the reality of the spiritual world that made miracles so powerful.

Some elements of miracle accounts are harder to parse as natural processes. It is difficult to understand how Ursmer's reliquary could have levitated and spewed smoke, but also difficult to understand why Robert submitted or anyone else believed the account if it did not. Geoffrey Koziol suspected 'a fakir's trick' by the monks of Lobbes, but an alternate explanation seems more likely.⁴⁰ According to medieval theologians, material substance's potential for rebellion against divine principles makes empirical evidence dubious. Material appearances can obscure truth as often as they reveal it. For example, by themselves, the bodies of dead saints can appear to be grotesque hunks of flesh and bone, but according to medieval Christian belief they are wonderful *pignera* ('pledges') of saints' favor to the communities that housed them. Corporal relics did not appear *as if* they were wonderful when they were *really* grotesque: they appeared *as if* they were grotesque when they were *really* wonderful. Both miracle accounts and reliquaries bear the stamp of efforts to help audiences see a representation of what they should comprehend. As Martina Bagnoli has argued, early medieval reliquaries often cover up relics with ornate sheaths of gold, silver and gems to stimulate understanding of spiritual truths.⁴¹ In a similar fashion it seems, authors covered events in vivid allegorical sheaths. Often, an author's or artist's paradoxical task was to reveal what lay hidden by covering up what was exposed. The account describing Ursmer's levitating reliquary states the monks placed the reliquary on the ground, indicating the saint was prostrating

⁴⁰ Koziol 1992, p. 251.

⁴¹ Bagnoli 2010, p. 141.

himself before the grieving Robert – a humiliating posture. It would have been easy for an early medieval observer to imagine any living elite in such a position becoming increasingly angry over the course of a three-hour stalemate. Eventually, Robert must have succumbed to the pressure of the saint's (imagined) anger and relented. The author of the account faced a challenge: how to describe the saint's invisible anger? He seems to have covered the reliquary in allegorical smoke and levitation to make the point. By a similar token, perhaps the account of the lame man at Wormhout reported blood loss because this was a trope that would have helped audiences understand what he had felt.⁴²

4. *Authority & persuasion*

Perhaps because of the unreliability of physical evidence, audiences were not easily persuaded that an event was miraculous. It is not enough to stipulate, as many scholars have, that people believed in the possibility of miracles. As Justice has persuasively argued, faith caused turmoil. He notes faith is not the certainty of knowledge but an act of will to believe despite appearances to the contrary. It generated questions about individual miracles, which are evident in accounts that incorporate and anticipate audiences' doubts.⁴³ For example, the clairvoyant saint Christina of Markyate (d. c. 1161) demonstrated knowledge of many events that her contemporaries suspected might have ordinary explanations – she was politically astute and could perhaps have guessed what would happen. It was not until she displayed knowledge of something she could not have known through her own faculties that her contemporaries truly accepted her powers.⁴⁴ While the type of questions people asked in the twelfth century might have been changing as a result of the narrowing of the miraculous, there is no reason to suspect people were any more skeptical than earlier, as the story about the residents of Leffingue illustrates. The villagers respected the monks of Bergues enough to place Lewinna's relics on their church's altar, but doubted and were

⁴² Nugent 2001, p. 49–50.

⁴³ Justice 2008, p. 12–14.

⁴⁴ Justice 2008, p. 16–17.

even hostile to the monks' claims about her sanctity. Drogo, the monk from Bergues who composed the written account of the miracle, was remarkably candid about their doubts, even if only to emphasize how the saint overcame them. Yet, he directed no anger or chastisement at the villagers. He laid no blame on them, nor did he castigate them for accusing the monks of being liars. Drogo clearly assumed the onus was on Lewinna, not the villagers to make plain her status.

Claims about saints and their purported deeds actually met some of the fiercest skepticism from ecclesiastics themselves. The clergy did not form a united front, supporting each other against the doubts of the laity. Instead, institutions, especially abbeys, competed vigorously to attract pilgrims to their shrines and frequently challenged the claims of rival shrines. For example, Adémar of Chabannes (d. 1034) concocted a legend that St. Martial, the third-century bishop of Limoges, had been one of the original apostles. At exactly the moment when Adémar should have marked his triumph – when he was about to celebrate the apostolic liturgy he had composed in the saint's honor – a monk from a different community stood up, challenged his claims, and made him the butt of jokes throughout the region.⁴⁵

In many ways, the number of miracles people did accept should surprise modern audiences. In a strongly hierarchical society like the early medieval West, the idea of miracles as subjective phenomena seems to grant too much authority to 'nobodies', as Rüth has dubbed the poor and humble who comprised the majority of the beneficiaries of miraculous cures – the most common type of miracle. These people had very little social capital to support their claims. Why did people believe the *admiratio* of nobodies was evidence for divine illumination?

Early medieval theology grounded piety in a link between affect and action. Psalm 110, 10 states 'initium sapientiae timor Domini intellectus bonus omnibus facientibus (The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding to all that do it)'. Performing reverence for God's majesty is the origin of piety. Not only does this sentiment about *timor Domini* and others like it appear numerous times in the scriptures, but Augus-

⁴⁵ Landes 1992, p. 214–215.

tine used it as the connection between the beatitudes in Matthew and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ More importantly, *timor Domini* was a critical component of monasticism, whose adherents dominated early medieval intellectual culture. The prologue to Benedict of Nursia's (d. c. 547) *Rule*, the most important set of monastic norms in the early Middle Ages, admonishes monks to rouse from their sleep and hear the words of the Holy Spirit, then continues 'Et quid dicit? "Venite, filii, audite me; timorem Domini docebo uos"' (And what does the Spirit say? 'Come, my sons, hear me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord [Ps. 33, 12])'.⁴⁷ Later, in chapter seven, the *Rule* instructs monks to climb the ladder of humility that leads to heavenly exaltation. The ladder begins with *timor Domini*: 'Primus itaque humilitatis gradus est, si timorem Dei sibi ante oculos semper ponens [...] semper sit memor omnia quae praecepit Deus (The first step of humility, therefore, is that placing the fear of God before his eyes at all times, one should [...] always remember everything God commanded)'.⁴⁸ Wonder at divine works leads to reverence for God, which in turn, should inspire moral behavior.

In fact, the *Rule* builds all of monastic life around preparation for affective experiences. In his classic exposition of medieval monastic spirituality, *L'Amour des Lettres et le Désir de Dieu*, Jean Leclercq emphasizes the affective nature of monastic piety.⁴⁹ In an ongoing process of reading called the *lectio divina* ('divine reading'), monks memorized, studied and reflected on the scriptures and other authoritative writings to internalize them. Their goal was not so much to achieve knowledge of Christian doctrine as to be moved by an awareness of God in creation. Following the path laid out in the writings of Gregory the Great (d. 604), monks sought to transform compunction over their sins into an abiding desire for God. In pursuit of this desire, they developed a sophisticated contemplative orthopraxis, which Mary Carruthers has dubbed 'monastic rhetoric'.⁵⁰ Through meditation on

⁴⁶ Cf. Job 28, 28; Prov. 1, 7; 8, 13; 9, 10; 15, 33; Sir. 1, 14, 16, 18, 20, 27; 21, 11; Mayeski 1992, p. 9.

⁴⁷ Benedict, *Rule*, prologue (ed. and trans. Venarde, p. 4–5).

⁴⁸ Benedict, *Rule*, prologue (ed. and trans. Venarde, p. 47).

⁴⁹ Leclercq 1990, p. 9–11, 31–34.

⁵⁰ Carruthers 1998, p. 2–3.

both the written and natural scriptures, monks sought to ascend the ladder of humility inspired by desire for God.

Monks were experts in pursuing affective piety, but everyone was susceptible to *admiratio*. In his *Dialogi*, Gregory the Great makes plain its role in inspiring humility and desire for God in the average believer:

An explanation of holy Scripture teaches us how to attain virtue and persevere in it, where a description of miracles shows us how this acquired virtue reveals itself in those who persevere in it. Then, too, the lives of the saints are often more effective than mere instruction for inspiring us to love heaven as our home. Hearing about their example will generally be helpful in two ways. In the first place, as we compare ourselves with those who have gone before, we are filled with a longing for the future life; secondly, if we have too high an opinion of our own worth, it makes us humble to find that others had done better.⁵¹

The passage reveals the complementarity of *imitatio* and *admiratio*. The lives of the saints provide abstract knowledge of *imitanda*, but they also reveal *admiranda* that inspire both longing for God and humility, which in turn, motivate *imitatio*.

5. *Embodied cognition*

The idea of wonder as evidence for illumination presents difficulties for the various approaches scholars now use to interpret early medieval miracle accounts. Most directly, wonder seems to fall under the purview of Barbara Rosenwein's methodology in her groundbreaking work on early medieval emotions. Rosenwein traces the history of 'emotional communities' through the words people used to describe emotions and in literary descriptions of emotional reactions. Unfortunately, miracle accounts rarely mention *admiratio* explicitly or discuss it at any length when they do. Instead, they most often dwell on hyperbolic descriptions of events. For example, they describe sicknesses and injuries in horrible detail. Sores are huge and emit blood and pus.

⁵¹ Gregory, *Dialogues*, ii.16 (trans. Zimmerman 1959, p. 5–6).

Arms and legs tremble. Heels adhere to buttocks (a common malady). Paralyzed joints and sinews give out loud cracks during cures. Bodies of the dead emit sweet odors. R  th interprets these precise physical descriptions as attempts to raise the credibility of accounts that present ‘nobodies’ as authorities, but as noted above, early medieval culture placed little stock in empirical evidence. Other scholars interpret the accounts as rhetorical structures pointing to concepts like the morality of virginity or the outsider status of an author, but not to wonder itself. The problem with current approaches is their logocentricity in the sense that they assume only signifiers for the abstract concept of *admiratio* could convey the experience of feeling it. Recent developments in cognitive science indicate that words can convey meaning much more directly and powerfully than semiotic theories allow.

The connection between physical details and wonder is neurological. In the 1990s, a team of neuroscientists at the Universit   degli Studi di Parma in Italy made a groundbreaking discovery while studying the brains of macaque monkeys. The neuroscientists were monitoring the individual neurons in the monkeys’ brains that are responsible for hand movements – different neurons ‘fire’ for each specific movement. Quite accidentally, the researchers discovered the same neurons also fire when a monkey observes someone else making the motions for which the neurons are responsible. Subsequent research has revealed that macaques possess these ‘mirror neurons’ for each movement.⁵²

More importantly, fMRI scans suggest mirror neurons are also present in human brains. In humans, they fire when an individual makes a specific motion, sees the motion being made by someone else, hears the sounds associated with the motion or speaks, hears or reads *the words* signifying the motion.⁵³ As an example for a popular audience, the neuroscientist Marco Iacoboni uses a head-butt that the French footballer Zinedine Zidane delivered to the chest of his Italian opponent, Marco Mater-

⁵² Gallese, Fadiga, Fogassi and Rizzolatti 1996, p. 593–609; Rizzolatti, Fogassi & Gallese 2001, p. 661–670; Rizzolatti & Craighero 2004, p. 169–192.

⁵³ Fadiga, Craighero, Buccino & Rizzolatti 2002, p. 399–402; Rizzolatti & Craighero 2004, p. 185–187; Aziz-Zadeh, Wilson, Rizzolatti & Iacoboni 2006, p. 1818–1823; Meister, Wilson, Deblieck, Wu & Iacoboni 2007, p. 1692–1696.

azzi, in the World Cup in 2006. When people see the head-butt on video, they have a physical response that includes activation of some of the same neurons that activated in both Zidane and Materazzi.⁵⁴ Although just the thought of a gruesome injury can induce a wince, the ‘resonances’ generated by mirror neurons are attenuated – observers do not experience the full sensory perception. This attenuation might explain hyperbole in miracle accounts. In order to induce a sense of the full *admiratio* experienced by witnesses, authors had to exaggerate physical details. At any rate, when people observe, read or hear about the details of an event like a miracle, they share part of the experience.

Mirror neurons supply physical connections between minds, but *admiratio* seems to be a more complex state than pain or an arm movement. In addition, people are capable of dissimulation and insincerity. As a result, deciphering other people’s mental states requires more sophisticated processes than those provided by mirror neuron systems alone. For example, in the story about Ursmer’s reliquary, although Robert places himself in a submissive posture before the saint, it is some time before he actually submits. The young knight’s resistance is clear even though mirror neurons would allow an audience to share the experience of the posture itself.

Theory of mind is the branch of cognitive science and philosophy concerned with how humans can know the mental states of others – how onlookers perceived Robert’s defiance. Traditionally, the major schools of thought on the subject have developed around two basic approaches.⁵⁵ On the one hand, the awkwardly-named ‘theory theory’ posits that our minds employ a scientific method to understand other people. The mind observes the behavior of others, develops a theory about what caused the behavior, then observes the behavior of still more people on similar occasions. If the second round of behavior does not match up to the abstract theory, the mind begins revisions. On the other hand, ‘simulation theory’ posits that the mind knows other minds by observing both other people and itself. It uses logic to compare the observable traits of other peo-

⁵⁴ Iacoboni 2008, p. 106–109.

⁵⁵ Gallese 2003, p. 520.

ple to its own internal state when it exhibits the same behaviors. These theories are actually more similar than the division into schools might imply. Accepting a basic Cartesian mind-body dualism, both conceptualize the mind and thought as disembodied logical processes.

The existence of mirror neurons provides critical support for a version of simulation theory known as embodied simulation, which differs from other theories in its erasure of the mind-body divide. This version argues that mirror neurons help the mind reproduce the actual neural activity of other minds as opposed to simulating them using abstract representations.⁵⁶ People do not understand someone else's wonder via the concept of wonder. They feel the other person's wonder. With regard to miracle accounts, the important feature of embodied simulation is how it emphasizes the role of actual emotions, rather than abstract ideas of emotions, in thought. In light of the early medieval prioritization of affection, it implies we ought to read miracle accounts primarily for their affective, rather than their semiotic, content – though, of course, the two can never be completely separated. Whether physical details or words about subjective experiences predominate in an account, the first goal of the text is usually to communicate the depth of the witness' (i.e. the authority's) *admiratio* as a way to persuade audiences.

6. Implications

Affective readings of miracle accounts shed new light on the role of monks in the cult of the saints. Although monks served as the caretakers for the majority of shrines, their most important role was less direct than as authorities in charge of authenticating miracles. During the early Middle Ages, monastic schools trained many of the clergy who ministered to the laity. As experts on the allegorical interpretation of the scriptures pioneered by the most important Christian intellectuals of the patristic era, monks also wrote most guides to the scriptures used by the clergy. With regard to miracles, monks would have primed society to look for illumination in specific types of events.

⁵⁶ Barsalou 2009, p. 1281–1289.

In addition, monks were liturgical specialists. They knew how to set the stage for the recognition of a miracle. It seems no accident that most miracles reportedly occurred when monks were performing the liturgy, especially on feast days and at night when darkness and chanting would have created an otherworldly atmosphere.⁵⁷ The ritual actions and postures recommended for supplicants might have been more important still. The theory of embodied cognition postulates that because the brain evolved to control movement, how the body interacts with its environment affects even abstract cognition.⁵⁸ For example, people often describe the personalities of others positively by saying they are ‘warm’. Some cognitive scientists argue this metaphor is connected to evidence that humans are more likely to identify positive traits in others when they encounter them in warm environments.⁵⁹ In addition, embodied cognition also holds that physical gestures have a direct impact on cognition. One celebrated experiment found that people were more likely to perceive cartoons as funny when they held a pen in their teeth (forming a partial smile) than when they held the pen with their lips (forming a partial frown).⁶⁰

Perhaps because the operations of the brain/mind are so unconscious and ‘natural’ rather than strictly logocentric, we know very little about its operation. Speculation continues to dominate the various cognitive sciences. Still, the evidence in favor of embodied cognition should give scholars pause in interpreting actions in the early Middle Ages. In one way or another, most recent analyses treat public behaviors textually. In the context of both the Linguistic and Performative Turns, acts become word-like signifiers in which social codes are ‘inscribed’ and which must be decoded for audiences to arrive at their social meanings. The content of both the codes and meanings is almost always described as ‘imagined’ or abstract.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Sigal 1985, p. 192–195.

⁵⁸ Glenberg & Robertson 2000, p. 379–401; Barsalou 1999, p. 577–660.

⁵⁹ Leung, Qiu, Ong & Tam 2011, p. 591.

⁶⁰ Leung, Qiu, Ong & Tam 2011, p. 593.

⁶¹ Numerous enlightening studies have appeared in these traditions. On the semiotic side, Ashley & Sheingorn 1999 is a good representative. On the performative side, Althoff 1997 and Koziol 2012 are both representative in their own ways.

If the theory of embodied cognition is accurate, it suggests new dimensions for analyses of early medieval experiences of wonder. While not discounting the role of culture in the interpretation of experience, embodied cognition focuses greater attention on the body in the mind-body dichotomy. Scholars need to take into account that the communication of *admiratio* will often have been an end in itself. They also need to investigate the physical conditions in which people recognized miracles. Did supplicants' prostrations lead to more miracles than other postures? Did communities that invested in more candles or better decorations for their shrines prompt the recognition of more miracles? Did people experience *admiratio* more often while one hymn was sung than they did during the singing of another?

Finally, the importance of *admiratio* as an experience reincorporates monks into the body of early medieval Christians. Rather than assume that monks were elites who spent centuries writing deceptive accounts, it is simpler and more convincing to assume they too believed in the miracles they reported. As experts in the practice of affective piety, they were, in fact, even more primed to experience *admiratio*, which helps explain both their effectiveness in promoting the miraculous (they did not have to dissimulate) and why miracles became less prominent in the late Middle Ages after the influence of monastic culture waned. Far from being heads who directed members of the body of Christ, they were united with the faithful by cognition that included both mind and body.

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Abstract

This essay considers the relationship between authority and miracles in the West during the early Middle Ages (c. 500–1100). In response to the way positivist historians discarded the miraculous in medieval texts, recent scholars have tried to redeem sources by studying what authors and audiences believed. Bracketing questions of truth, they sidestep questions about how authors convinced believers that witnesses experienced what modern scholars themselves believe they could not have experienced. For this reason, scholars cannot explain why early medieval people treated miracle accounts as 'non-fiction'. Recent developments in cognitive science suggest that a persistent mind-body dualism in Western culture is the root of the problem. Wonder in the context of a Platonic metaphysic created early medieval miracles. Where modern scholars have tried to understand miracles in terms of subjective feelings generated by objective, physical events, early medieval believers described them as generated by a separate, spiritual realm. In addition, scholars have traditionally assumed people who experience wonder can only relate the abstract concept of that mental state to others. However, recent cognitive theories indicate that the experience of wonder involves both the body and the mind. The same scientific findings also challenge assumptions about monastic authority over miracles. Monastic influence on miracles was largely indirect.

EDWARD M. SCHOOLMAN

ENGINEERED HOLY AUTHORITY AND THE TENTH-CENTURY *VITA* OF ST. BARBATIANUS OF RAVENNA*

1. *Introduction*

In the early 1040s, the great reformer Peter Damian offered a sermon on the life of Barbatianus on the day of his feast, December 31.¹ As the veneration of Barbatianus was primarily local and had been centered on a small *monasterium* in the city once governed by Ravenna's nobles families, the promotion of the cult in the eyes of Damian was part of his larger effort to encourage the reform the behavior of the city's inhabitants the church in Ravenna which is reflected in the sermon's text. On the topic of the saint in particular, he offered a parallel between Christ and the Ravennate saint, as one responsible for salvation and the other imbued with the power to heal cloaked in the faith of Christ; he positioned the travels of Barbatianus from Antioch to Italy in a metaphor on the morning star. Most of all he promoted the saint's most important attribute, his powers as a healer and his desire to avoid recognition for his miraculous cures. Damian directs his audience to contemplate Barbatianus's humility:

Ecce enim hic beatissimus uir Barbatianus, cuius hodie nobis
festiuus natalis illuxit, non humanae laudis gloriam petiit,

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¹ On the context and theology of sermon 65, see Laqua 1976, p. 209–222; Lucchesi 1975, p. 35–36. The date of the feast according to Lucchesi's edition, represents the Roman tradition, while the date of January 2 is given for the feast in calendars and *vitae* associated with Ravenna.

non fauores hominum alectauit, non de ostensis tot miraculis apparere ipse mirabilis uoluit, non de collatis tot in languidos beneficiis humanae retributionis praemium expectauit.²

Even with respect to the most notable aspect of Barbatianus's legend and *vita*, his relationship to empress Galla Placidia as confessor and spiritual advisor, Damian argues that the saint's authority and relationship were derived not from his sanctity, asceticism, or parallels to other holy men, but almost exclusively from his miraculous healing abilities. In Damian's sermon, Galla Placidia seeks out the saint for his miraculous medical gifts, and '*suppliciter eius flagitabat auxilium pro quadam sua pedissequa, quae intolerabilibus cruciabatur doloribus oculorum*'.³ Most importantly, Damian does not mention the most important miracle, the assistance Barbatianus rendered in helping Galla Placidia obtain a relic in the form of the sandal of John the Evangelist. In this sermon, the authority provided for the saint is derived entirely from Barbatianus's status as a miraculous healer (that is, through his abilities); this facet of his sanctity had been secondary during the promotion of the cult in the previous three centuries, when his position in relation to Galla Placidia, and subsequently his assistance in obtaining a relic through a vision described in hagiographic literature, were the keys to his authority as a saint, that is epistemic authority and authority derived from association.⁴

In the following chapter, I will present the creation of the *vita* of Barbatianus and the attempt to mold hagiography to suit

² 'Behold this most blessed man Barbatianus, whose feast-day illuminates today for us, who did not seek the glory of human praise, who did not desire the attention of men, who did not wish to appear himself admirable on account of the many miracles he performed, and who did not expect to be rewarded for the carrying out so many services for the infirm', *Sermo* 65.6; Lucchesi 1983.

³ 'demanded his help for her female attendant, who was suffering from intolerable pains in her eyes', *Sermo* 65.7.

⁴ The relics of Barbatianus were certainly known to Peter Damian and his audience in eleventh century Ravenna. They were likely translated from the church dedicated to the saint to the main cathedral in Ravenna as part of a program of centralizing relics there in the tenth century, and would have helped to support the legitimacy of the authority of the archbishop, as '[d]uring periods of relatively weak central government, for example, in the later sixth and again in the eleventh century, relics were prized not simply for their thaumaturgic power, but also for their ability to substitute for public authority...'. Geary 1988, p. 179. On the relics, see Verhoeven 2011, p. 83–84.

the particular political needs of promoting Ravenna as a possible center of spiritual significance in the tenth century, when the city once again becomes a focal point for imperial interest in the Middle Ages and new monastic institutions emerge, and conclude by examining the changing nature of the saint's authority as manifest in the subsequent diffusion and re-contextualization of his *vita* and legend.⁵ The narrative of the *vita* outlines the life of Barbatianus, a holy man of Syrian origin living first in Rome and subsequently in Ravenna in the fifth century, and describes his relationship with the Empress Galla Placidia, his role as her confessor, and his miracles (healing and otherwise).

There is no conclusive evidence for the exact dating of the composition of the *vita* of Barbatianus, a fact which has led to debate over the last century. While the sermon of Damian offers a *terminus ante quem*, the content itself suggests that it was likely produced in second half of the tenth century, when the kernels of the small local cult were transformed in response to changes in the local political climate. The result was the production of the new *vita* (and the successful rediscovery of Barbatianus), a meaningful tool with which contemporary citizens and visitors could draw parallels to Ravenna's imperial past. Given that Ravenna had again become a regional center under the Ottonians, who established an imperial residence and would eventually select the city's archbishops, the *vita* would have been a continuous reminder of the connections between imperial families, their patronage, and the saints and city of Ravenna.⁶ With the end of the Ottonian line and the receding fortunes of the city, later efforts in the eleventh and twelfth century reframed the *vita* while Barbatianus remained one of the Ravenna's local saints.⁷ The sermon on Barbatianus by Peter Damian, the saint's inclusion in a poem by Hugutius of Pisa (Uguccione da Pisa), and the

⁵ The text of the *vita* is assigned BHL 972. On the context of the *vita* and its place in tenth-century Ravenna more broadly, see Schoolman 2016.

⁶ On the Ottonians in Ravenna, see Warner 2006.

⁷ The activities of the second half of the tenth century, such as the translation of relics, reforms of monasteries, and the creation of new hagiographic texts, give way to a more somber eleventh century. On the state of hagiography between the tenth and the eleventh century, see Ropa 1991, p. 344–351. On Ravenna's political situation in the same period, Capitani 1991, p. 169–174.

dissemination of the *vita* beyond Ravenna, all represented the new ways in which Barbatianus was used. In these instances, the original importance of Barbatianus and the authority he gained from his relationship receded as the legend became part of the fabric of the local Ravennate hagiographic landscape.

The Latin tenth-century life of Barbatianus (appearing often with the title of *acta sancti barbatani presbyteris et confessoris* in manuscripts) survives in eleven manuscripts from the end of the eleventh century through the fourteen century, most in hagiographic collections originally designed for liturgical use from Ravenna, its dependencies in Romagna, or Tuscany. The other manuscripts containing the *vita* of Barbatianus are various types of non-liturgical compilations, such as the fifteenth century *Codex Estensis* from the Biblioteca Estense in Modena (which also includes a wide range of other material directly related to the history of Ravenna) or the six volume manuscript of the work of Petrus Calo that incorporates an abbreviated life based on the original *vita*.⁸

The *editio princeps* of the *vita* was first published in 1708 by Benedetto Bacchini, based on the version of the text in the *Codex Estensis*, and appeared as an appendix to his edition of the *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis* by Agnellus (a serial biography of the bishops and archbishops of Ravenna written during the course of fifteen years beginning in the 830s).⁹ Bacchini's edition was also included as part of the appendix to the *Liber Pontificalis* of Agnellus published by Muratori in *Rerum italicarum scriptores*.¹⁰ The more recent edition, which also included the first complete study of the *vita*, was published by Francesco Lanzoni in 1909.¹¹

⁸ On the composition of this codex commonly known as the *Codex Estensis* and analysis of its composition, which included the *Liber Pontificalis* of Ravenna and a number of *vitae* unknown in other sources, see Deliyannis's introduction to the edition of the text in Agnellus of Ravenna 2006. The abridged version of the *vita* included in Petrus Calo's comprehensive collection is known from a fifteenth century copy in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice (MS lat IX 16), and can be found under *BHL* 972b.

⁹ Agnellus of Ravenna 1708, p. 38–58. The emphasis of Ravenna's autocephaly reflected in the *Codex Estensis*, and especially the *Liber Pontificalis* (*LPR*) of Agnellus, made their publication by Bacchini problematic, and greatly affected his career. Momigliano 1990, p. 132–136. On the dating of the *LPR*, see Deliyannis's introduction to the edition of Agnellus of Ravenna 2006, p. 11–19.

¹⁰ Muratori 1723, p. 194–198.

¹¹ Lanzoni 1909.

This edition was improved with the acknowledgement of three additional manuscripts containing the life, and a complete revision of the text. In his commentary accompanying the edition, Lanzoni made two important observations: first, that the four versions available to him were not directly related, but were modeled from the same archetype, a factor which suggests both earlier dating for the creation of the *vita* and variant readings related to its diffusion; and second, that the *vita* included significant material from another set of *miracula* (from a translation of the Greek *miracula* of Cyrus and John written by Sophronius in the seventh century) and some details taken from the Roman *Liber Pontificalis*. However the consequences of creating the edition led Lanzoni to reject the differences among the extant copies, which provide a history of the text's journey beyond Ravenna.

After the twelfth century, the veneration of Barbatianus was relegated to a small local cult, with the relics of the saint placed in Ravenna's cathedral, and stood in a relatively minor position compared to the other Ravennate saints, mostly martyrs and bishops. The legend of Barbatianus, once ephemeral and disused, had been recreated and promoted, resulting in the dissemination of the saint through this new *vita*; however, despite the inclusion of stories about Barbatianus into lectionaries and legends, in sermons, and his image in mosaics, the cult is never widely established, and by the early modern period Barbatianus had been relegated to a bit part within the corpus of Ravennate saints. The early modern editors of his *vita* found little of interest, and even Lanzoni conceived its text as built through the "plundering" of other sources (namely the *miracula* of Cyrus and John), although it is perhaps a process better understood as an act of hagiographic plagiarism.¹² The decline in importance of the

¹² Lanzoni describes the adoption of the miracles as *saccheggio* ('plundering'), but strives to position the *vita* into its tenth century context; Lanzoni 1909, p. 713. More recent works cite Barbatianus as a saint of limited historical value. In Deborah Deliyannis's survey of Ravenna's imperial history, she comments that 'the legend of St. Barbatian [*sic*] as the confessor of Galla Placidia is entirely derivative; it was developing in Agnellus's time...'. Deliyannis 2010, p. 104. The best analysis of the *vita* within the framework of the cult and its monuments (although like Lanzoni, makes a claim to the invented nature of the saint) appears in Verhoeven 2011, p. 80–85.

legend is mirrored by the physical remains of the cult: the church dedicated to St. John and Barbatianus fell into disrepair to the point that it was unknown in the fifteenth century, and at some point in the tenth century his relics were moved into the main altar of cathedral of Ravenna. His cult continued to languish as a small part of the large corpus of locally venerated saints; eventually in the seventeenth century his relics were deposited into an early Christian sarcophagus in the southern chapel of the Cathedral in Ravenna dedicated to the Virgin 'del Sudore' that he shares with the tomb of the fourteenth-century archbishop Rainaldo of Concorezzo.¹³

2. *Saints in Ravenna*

To evaluate the processes by which authority was engineered for Barbatianus in his *vita* and its afterlife, it is essential to begin with the unique relationship between Ravenna and its hagiography, from which vantage both the practicalities and politics of the creation of the *vita* and its role in the city after the tenth century may come into focus. The creation and modification of saints with the aim of the engineering of holy authority was a long-standing practice in Christian realms of the medieval world. When hagiography was composed or adjusted to suit particular needs, the complexities of past precedents, political exigencies, and the willingness of people to adopt new saints for veneration, all factored into how the new *vitae* would be formed. In the case of Ravenna, its particular place in the history of Italy and its relationship to the saints who were venerated in the city are closely intertwined.

Despite its marshy territory and location off the major arterial roads, Ravenna has historically figured prominently as an administrative center since the first century AD. During the first two centuries of the Roman Empire, Ravenna's port at Classe served as the primary naval base for the Adriatic fleet, however during political crises in the third century the city lost its importance. The choice of Ravenna as capital in the early years of the

¹³ The sarcophagus was originally located in San Lorenzo in Caesarea and moved in the thirteenth century. Verhoeven 2011, p. 84.

fifth century marked the dramatic evolution of the sleepy backwater to a swampy fortress, with a church that tended toward autocephaly; the city remained at the center of Italy during the period of Ostrogothic control, as well as after the Byzantine reconquest of the 540s, however the territory under its administration was much reduced upon arrival of the Lombards in the 570s. Connected to both Rome and Constantinople, following this period Ravenna evolved its own unique civic aristocracy based on Byzantine military officers and local Ravennate landowners, who came to dominate local administration and episcopal offices. The conquest of Ravenna by the Lombards in the middle of the eighth century and the subsequent arrival of Charlemagne a quarter century later revitalized opportunities for the city to be significant again, a fact made clear by the plundering of Ravenna's relics and monuments for installation in cities north of the Alps under the Carolingians. Further still, in the 960s, the arrival of Otto I again gave Ravenna special importance.¹⁴

Yet throughout its history, Ravenna was never a spiritual capital.¹⁵ Its subordination with respect to religious matters to other major Italian cities like Rome, Milan, or even Aquileia, was long recognized by the citizens of Ravenna, and especially its bishops and archbishops who came to dominate local society and to encourage the veneration of local saints. As early as the fifth century, when the city acted as imperial capital, the lack of pre-Constantinian martyrs connected to Ravenna made the selection of its early bishops as saints the clearest choice, especially the figure of Apollinaris. This early bishop was said to come from Antioch and was the primary disciple of the apostle Peter, tying Ravenna's early ecclesiastic history to that of Rome and offering a direct line to apostolic succession.¹⁶ This connection between Apollinaris and Peter was part of a trend to 'enhance

¹⁴ On Ravenna's history, see Carile 1991, 1992; Deliyannis 2010.

¹⁵ The city's tendency towards autocephaly was closely connected to political and episcopal struggles over sovereignty and authority with Rome.

¹⁶ The *Passio sancti Apollinaris*, the main source for his life, was most likely written in the sixth or seventh century, and survives in a number of manuscripts from the ninth century including some with non-Italian provenances (such as *Chartes BM* 63 (115 1/8)). On the *Passio* and its use in Agnellus, see Agnellus of Ravenna 2006, p. 94–97.

the prestige of certain sees in northern Italy.¹⁷ However, the cult connected to Apollinaris did not gain much support until the sixth century, when on the heels of a dramatic period of urban renewal and civic euergetism, a large church was dedicated to this early episcopal leader, a newly constructed basilica over the presumed tomb of Apollinaris in the city of Classe (a second church, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, would be dedicated to the saint, although it had originally been built by the Arian and Ostrogothic king Theodoric and dedicated to Christ; in the sixth-century rededicated to Saint Martin of Tours).¹⁸ The construction of this church in Classe, which would grow to be the center of Ravenna's episcopal cult, was likely designed to position Ravenna as a city worthy of autonomy from the other traditional capitals of Italy.

While possessing a wide range of sainted bishops in the mold of Apollinaris, such as the fourth century Severus (whose relics were supposedly taken to Germany in the ninth century), the fifth century Ursus, as well as the sermon writer and theologian Peter Chrysologus who was bishop from 431–450, Ravenna lacked a substantive connection to the earliest Christian communities in Italy which had been cultivated in the other Roman capitals, Milan and Rome. The remedy for this inadequacy was finally addressed in the sixth century, when a letter was composed by an anonymous Ravennate hagiographer but fictionally attributed to the great Milanese Bishop Ambrose.¹⁹ This letter continued and elaborated on the story of the martyrs Gervasius

¹⁷ The traditions concerning these founders 'reflect the competition between various bishoprics, especially in those cases – such as Milan, Ravenna, and Aquileia, where not just prestige, but also the justification of autonomy, authority and jurisdiction was at issue'. Humphries 1999, p. 69.

¹⁸ For the history and background of these two churches, see Deliyannis 2010, p. 146–174 and 259–274.

¹⁹ The activity here does not parallel modern forgery, but can only be seen in the lens of the competition between Ravenna and these other cities for ownership of saints that likely had established cults in the city. "The variety of hagiographical forgeries was infinite... even to promote national causes. Ademar of Chabannes wanted to prove the apostolicity of St. Martial, and the *vita* of St. Servatius was designed to sanctify the reign of Henry IV and to assert the independence of bishops of Tongres by showing that their power derived directly from St. Peter." Constable 1983. On the process of medieval letter forgeries in general, see: Constable 1988.

and Protasius, whose relics were discovered by Ambrose.²⁰ This new text, now known as the *Passio sanctorum martyrum Gervasii et Protasii*, offered new background of the martyrs and provided them with a genealogy connected to Ravenna: their parents were also martyred. Their father Vitalis, a *miles consularis*, was killed in Ravenna for coming to the aid of a Christian who had been ordered to perform a sacrifice to the pagan gods.²¹ The narrative concerning Vitalis ends with the pronouncement that up to the present, the martyr '[...] *praestat orationibus vel intercessione suis beneficia omnibus credentibus Iesum Christum usque in hodiernum diem*'.²² By adopting the father of Milan's two "recent" martyrs, the hagiographers at work in Ravenna raised the visibility of their city, its episcopal and spiritual authority, and its claim to a substantial early Christian past fitting with its position as the political capital of Italy.²³ This adoption of Vitalis is crowned by the church of San Vitale, completed in the middle of sixth century, which fuses imperial iconography and the strength of the local episcopate in its ornate and singular mosaic decorations.²⁴

The construction of the legends of Apollinaris and Vitalis served a number of purposes for the community, but the promotion of the authority of the church of Ravenna against its

²⁰ Ambrose notes that Milan, like Ravenna, had been "once barren of martyrs, but now the mother of many" due to the discovery of a number of relics. The discovery of the relics of these saints is addressed by Ambrose in *Ep. 22*, while their translation and establishment in a basilica is noted in the *vita* of Ambrose by Paulinus of Milan.

²¹ *Epistolae ex Ambrosianarum numero segregatae*, (PL 17), col. 821–825, *Ep. 2.7*.

²² '... supplies his favor through prayers and intercessions for every believer in Jesus Christ even today.'

²³ Gervasius and Protasius were not only integrated into Ravenna's local venerative practices, but were adopted in Tours as well, where their relics were said to have been taken to either pay homage to Ambrose's contemporary Martin of Tours, or by Martin himself, as tools to combat the heresy of Arianism. Van Dam 1993, p. 17. The power of these saints is well known and in the early sixth century Eugippius relates a story of the relics of the martyrs travelling to Noricum, their discovery in the marketplace, and their installation into the monastery of Severinus (*Vita Severini IX*)

²⁴ On the hagiography of Vitalis and his cult, see the numerous contributions in Fasoli 1993. On the legend of Vitalis and the construction of the church, see Deliyannis 2010, p. 223–254.

greatest rivals, Rome and Milan, stands out.²⁵ The byproducts are visible not only in the hagiographic literature, but also in the monuments built to honor these key saints. However, engineering sanctity in Ravenna was not always as successful as with the case of Apollinaris and Vitalis, and the afterlife of the legend of Barbatianus serves as a counterpoint to these earlier examples, and suggests what happens to saints who are unsuccessful in the missions for which they are created or refashioned.

3. *The vita of Barbatianus*

The late antique and early medieval contexts of Ravennate saints, and the roles that they have played in the attempts to bolster and support the authority of Ravenna (both as an independently minded episcopal see and as an imperial capital), allow for a clearer understanding of the aims of the author and compiler of the *vita* of Barbatianus. Exploring the life and its creation reveals the mode in which it was constructed and the way in which the *vita* of this local saint was promoted.

The *vita* of Barbatianus situates the saint in the early fifth century; like Apollinaris, he came from Antioch to Rome where he becomes known for his sanctity. He was discovered by the Empress Galla Placidia hiding and living in the cemetery of Calixtus and after performing healing miracles for members of her court and others in Rome, he was sent to Ravenna where he continued to perform miraculous healing. He also took on the role of spiritual advisor to Galla Placidia, who built a chapel connected to the Church of John the Baptist in which Barbatianus maintained his cell. Most important of all, he assisted her with obtaining a relic in the form of the sandal of John the Evangelist during a visit by his apparition for a new church the empress had built:

[...] et tamquam sopor somnii ad sanctissimum confessor-
rem Christi accessit. Qui nex fortiter dormiens nex uigi-
lans plenius, uidit hominem in ueste praeclara ambulantem
uultu angelico, et thuribulum in manu gestantem in censum

²⁵ For an overview of the struggle between these cities for political authority through the cult of saints, and Gervasius, Protasius, and Vitalis, see: Carlà 2010.

Domino mittendum, ex expergefactus existimabat se uisim uidisse. Qui cum apertis oculis eum clariter intuitus fuisset, silenter perrexit ubi Augusta dormiebat, et lenius eam contingens ut euigilaret. Quae dum euigilata fuisset, digito suo ipse santissimus Barbatianus virum illum, quem uiderate, eidem Augustae demonstravit. Quae et ipsa feruens animo in Domino, erecta est de loco illo, ubi iacebat, et adcurrrens cum magno gaudio, ad pedes eius provoluta eum tenere voluit. Qui subito ab oculis eius sublatus est, et sandaliam, quam in dextero pede habuerat, in eius manibus reliquit.²⁶

This physical capture of a relic from the realm of a dream-state or a vision was exceptionally miraculous; there is significant evidence in hagiography for dreams that communicate the location of relics (as in the discovery of Gervasius and Protasius), the suitability for a site for the construction of a church or shrine, or the displeasure or happiness of the saints to their communities, but seldom are objects taken out of the spiritual world.²⁷ However throughout the hagiographic tradition, there was sometimes a physical link provided by the visions that left an ephemeral trace, such as the sweet milk consumed by Perpetua during her first vision which she is still able to taste after she wakes; in most

²⁶ *Vita Barbatiani* 13. 'then just as deep sleep approached the most holy confessor of Christ, who was not sleeping soundly nor was he entirely awake, he saw a man in wondrous garments with an angelic expression walking towards him, and a censer filled with incense being swung in his hand for the Lord, and rousing himself he considered the vision he saw. With open eyes he was clearly familiar with him, and he proceeded silently to where the Empress was sleeping and he gently touched her so that she might wake up. After she had awoken, with his finger the same most holy Barbatianus had pointed out the Empress the man he saw, and she herself was engulfed by her spirit in the Lord. She stood up from the spot in which she lay, and hastening with great joy as she wished to hold him prostrating herself at his feet. Right before her eyes he was quickly lifted, but his sandal, which had been on his right foot, remained in her hands'.

²⁷ The hagiography from Gaul, and in particular the works of Gregory of Tours, have played an important role in popularizing the efficacy and authority of visions and dreams; see in particular Moreira 2000; Van Dam 1993. The authority given to dreams in hagiographic literature allowed for the 'sanctioning and validating the dream experience and placing it within the framework of religious experience. It is in this context that we encounter the dream as a *topos* in the building of churches, the dream having served as the impetus for their construction, refurbishment, or aggrandizement or as the source of assistance during their building campaign'. Carty 1999, p. 45. On the early traditions of visions in hagiography, see Amat 1985.

cases, the vision itself typically is evidence enough of the spiritual encounter.²⁸

The narrative of the *vita* ends when Barbatianus becomes ill and dies; his remains are taken by the bishop Peter Chrysologus and Galla Placidia, and installed in the church that was said to have held his cell and was subsequently rededicated to both John the Baptist and Barbatianus.²⁹ On its surface, the overall narrative is compelling: Barbatianus, an easterner like the first bishop of Ravenna, and a healer through his prayers and supplication, became the close confidant of the empress and guided her in philanthropy and patronage. The effect of this is even stronger given its likely chronological provenance of the second half of the tenth century, with the rise of interest in urban monasticism and monastic reform and the arrival of the Ottonian emperors.

As evidenced by the short description of Barbatianus's burial in Agnellus's *Liber Pontificalis Ravennatis Ecclesiae*, it is clear that the *vita* was not created out of a void of material, but rather from some small kernel of established hagiographic tradition. Agnellus's short description consists entirely of the following statement:

Temporibus Galle Placidie auguste, sicus scriptum reperi-mus, corpus beati Barbatiani idem Petrus Crisologus cum predicta auguta aromatibus condiderunt et cum magno honore sepelierunt non longe ad posterulam Ouilionis. Conseuravitque ecclesiam sancti Iohanis Barbatiani, quam Baduarius hedificauit.³⁰

²⁸ Miller 1994; Waldner 2012.

²⁹ While the *vita* simply describes his interment in the church of John the Baptist, Agnellus's account in the *Liber Pontificalis* is inconsistent in this detail, and reports that he was buried by Galla Placidia and Peter Chrysologus in the same church but suggests that the church was built by a late sixth-century general named Baduarius, lending a significant note of uncertainty to the location of his relics in Late Antiquity. Deliyannis 2010, p. 104; Verhoeven 2011, p. 81–82.

³⁰ 'In the time of the Empress Galla Placidia, as we have found written, the same Peter Chrysologus with the above-mentioned empress preserved the body of blessed Barbatian [*sic*] with aromatics and buried him with great honor not far from the Ovilian gate. And he consecrated the church of Sts. John and Barbatian [*sic*], which Baduarius built'. Trans. Deliyannis in Agnellus of Ravenna 2004.

The use of ‘*sicut scriptum reperimus*’ suggests that Agnellus was reporting from a known inscription or possibly some other text, and nestled the information on the life of Barbatianus (including the fact that Peter Chrysologus was a major actor in the burial and consecration) between two other larger stories relating to the bishop Peter (his consecration with the bishop of Imola, Projectus, and an elaborate narration of his death). The placement of this scene, which does little in the way of promoting Peter or Ravenna, seems to be part of Agnellus’s grand program of monument cataloging, and at the very least provides firm evidence for the veneration of Barbatianus in the ninth century and the existence of his tomb and church preceding it.

Two further examples of material evidence may support the supposition that some kernel of knowledge of Barbatianus existed before the record of the *Liber Pontificalis* of Ravenna. The first is the early Christian sarcophagus into which the relics of Barbatianus were placed in the seventeenth century; while it comes from the Church of San Lorenzo in Caesarea, and lacks an inscription (common on other reused sarcophagi in Ravenna), one of the figures on the front panel could be identified as Barbatianus based on the iconography of all three figures on its front panel; on the right appears John the Baptist holding a cross; in the center, a youthful Christ; and on the left a bearded man holding a surgeon’s box, an item commonly seen in the iconography of healing saints, and in this case forging a connection with Barbatianus.³¹ While the history of this sarcophagus offers no guarantee that in Late Antiquity it was associated with the saint, the iconography matching Barbatianus and John the Baptist (connected through the fifth century church dedication) suggests why it was selected as the most effective place to inter the relics of the saint during the translation of his relics within the cathedral.

The second is a marble fragment, now in the archiepiscopal museum, with an inscription indicating the placement of the

³¹ A later example of the connection between the iconography of surgeon’s boxes and healing saints is located the so-called Chapel of the Holy Physicians in the church of S. Maria Antiqua in Rome, which dates to the pontificate of John VII (705–707). Knipp. 2002. For a detailed study and bibliography of the sarcophagus, see: Kollwitz and Herdejürgen 1979, p. 125–126.

relics or body of Barbatianus. Its original context and its exact dating have been contested: Corrado Ricci has argued for a date of the fifth century, and the catalog of Ravenna's Latin epigraphy suggests it dated to the sixth century.³² Given that the panel, a simple inscription reading '*hic umatur corpus / beati barbatiani / confessoris xpi*', was more likely originally connected to the placement of the relics in the altar of the cathedral or their translation to the southern chapel a date of the tenth century (or as late as the seventeenth century) is more appropriate.³³ Even if either Ricci or Rugo are correct in their assessment of the dating, this panel provides only the first evidence for the cult of Barbatianus in Late Antiquity and nothing substantial about the saint himself.

The limited evidence (both textual and material) may have been problematic for Agnellus, who relied liberally on other sources, including hagiography, in his discussions of bishops; by the second half of the tenth century, it offered the author of the *vita* a convenient shell in which to compose a life fit for contemporary Ravenna.³⁴ During this period, the impetus behind the veneration of the saint would have been driven by the activity of an urban *monasterium* dedicated to Barbatianus and John the Baptist, which fell under the control of an important aristocratic family.³⁵ The connection it draws to the imperial family specifically would have been especially useful in promoting this urban monastery (as well as the families to which it was connected) after the establishment of Ottonian rule in Italy in the middle of the tenth century.

This period, from Agnellus to the end of the tenth century, was marked by a fractured political landscape in Northern Italy,

³² Rugo 1976, p. 46, no. 52.

³³ Verhoeven 2011, p. 85.

³⁴ On Agnellus's use of other material, including hagiography, see: Raven-natis 2006, p. 21–52.

³⁵ The evidence for the *monasterium*, which would likely have been a small monastery attached to the church of John the Baptist and Barbatianus, is primarily preserved in the material from the monastery of Pomposa, which received the monastery and its property from the archbishop of Ravenna in 1040 (by which point it had lost its dedication to John the Baptist). The earliest mention of the *monasterium* is 932, with documents also dating 953, 957 and 983, by which point the abbot was Paul, the son of the *dux* Paul known as de Traversaria. Bovini 1969.

capped by two periods in which foreign kings, the Carolingians and the Ottonians, made trips to Ravenna in acknowledgment of its former role as imperial capital. In the case of the Ottonians, they regularly visited the city and eventually putting the archiepiscopacy under their control. Under these conditions, the veneration of a saint like Barbatianus could function as a reminder of Ravenna's relationship with imperial families, the connection between imperial sponsorship and the monastic institutions of Ravenna, which heightened the authority and position granted to the city by earlier rulers in order to affect the perceptions of these new monarchs. Under these conditions, the knowledge of the life of Barbatianus was fleshed out and a *vita* was created and engineered in the second-half of the tenth century specifically to appeal to these new monarchs and members of their retinue, and to give new meaning to the relics and promote their veneration.³⁶

4. *Composing the vita*

The clergy in Ravenna and its local monks, presumably the ones responsible for the writing of the *vita* of Barbatianus, faced a dilemma in building a legend for the saint. First, there was little in the way of raw material on the life of Barbatianus, as the *Liber Pontificalis* of Agnellus only noted his burial with no mention of miracles or his close relationship to Galla Placidia, although may have been surviving inscriptions mentioning the saint (perhaps noting his role in the obtaining of the sandal of John the Evangelist).³⁷ Even more problematic was the status of Barba-

³⁶ The only firm date for the creation of the *vita* of Barbatianus is 1044, a *terminus ante quem* offered by its mention in the sermon of Peter Damian; the likely *terminus post quem* is its absence for the *LPR* (c. 850). This wide dating range has been adopted in surveys, such as that of Tomea 2001. However, the stress on a local monastic institution (as Barbatianus is described as living under a *regula monachorum*) and the importance of the imperial family to the narrative strongly suggest that the author was writing during the second half of the tenth century, a position I elaborate further in a forthcoming monograph on the *vita*.

³⁷ The fact that Barbatianus secured a relic for the church of St. John the Evangelist is not mentioned, although Agnellus describes the story of the foundation of the church after a particularly treacherous sea journey citing inscriptions (*LPR* 42) as well as the mosaic decoration she orders for the apse (*LPR* 27).

tianus's sanctity: since Barbatianus had not been a martyr, and his legend and relics were not enhanced by authority from an episcopal position, the traditional models for the saints of Ravenna could not be employed. In their place, and possibly relying on some lost evidence, Barbatianus was provided with sacred authority in the guise of a monastic miraculous healer, a popular and well-known holy figure dating back to the fourth century.³⁸

While two miracles performed by the saint seemed to have been in currency before the compilation of the *vita* (the story of the relic and a tale of a jealous husband frozen before he could attack the saint), further information was needed to provide depth to the *vita* and a stronger case for Barbatianus's sanctity. Rather than creating or generating miracles independently, the author and compiler of the *vita* of Barbatianus committed an act of literary *furta sacra* and went to sources which were most likely unknown to those who would make up the audience for his life; in this case, the *miracula* of the doctors Cyrus and John, an abbot and soldier respectively, from which eight miracles are taken to support the two miracles which appear to be original to Barbatianus, and the papal *Liber pontificalis* from which some introductory material was adapted.³⁹

The *miracula* of Cyrus and John were originally collected and composed in Greek in the seventh century by Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem. Since the early fifth century, the relics of the two saints had been popular in Egypt, and the *vitae* of these saints may have been known as early as the sixth century in Italy, and certainly by the eighth century when both saints appeared in the frescos of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome.⁴⁰

³⁸ On episcopal sanctity, see Rapp. 2005. The topic of the relationship between saintly healing and other modes of late antique and early medieval medical practice has received significant scholarly attention, including: Brown 1981, p. 113–120; Talbot 2002.

³⁹ On the use of the *Liber pontificalis* in the hagiography of this period, see Herbers 2003.

⁴⁰ Cyrus, in his traditional form of Abbacyrus, appears on a frescoed icon in the atrium of Santa Maria from the middle of the eighth century, Knipp. 2002, p. 17–22. I owe a debt of gratitude to Maya Maskarinec for pointing me to this article and for sharing her work on Cyrus and John from her forthcoming dissertation, *Building Rome Saint by Saint: Sanctity from Abroad and Home in the City (6th–9th century)* (UCLA, 2015).

Yet this specific collection of miracles associated with Cyrus and John was virtually unknown in the Latin west, although two translations had been made: one by Bonifatius Consiliarius of the first twelve miracles at the end of the seventh or early eighth century, and a second by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, which included all seventy of the miracles and likely relied in part on the translation of Bonifatius for the first twelve.⁴¹ Neither translation appears to have been commonly circulated within the cult centers of Cyrus and John, and very few manuscripts survive to attest to their popularity (the text of Bonifatius's translation is lost, while Anastasius's translation survives in only three manuscripts of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century).⁴² Nevertheless, during the tenth century someone connected to the church of Ravenna was able to obtain a copy of either Bonifatius's or Anastasius's translation (or a section of the latter) and put it to use by repurposing the miracles of Cyrus and John into the *vita* of Barbatianus.⁴³ Although the miracles were relatively devoid of geographic and cultural markers suggesting their Egyptian or Greek origin, they were not simply copied verbatim, but crafted in language and content to suit the formation of a *vita* for Barbatianus in light of the political needs of tenth century, the geography of Ravenna, and the context of a fifth century saint in the sphere of the late Roman imperial household.

In terms of crafting the language of the *miracula* to fit Barbatianus's *vita*, three short examples illustrate the various means by

⁴¹ While there are some details about a papal official of the seventh century named Bonifatius Consiliarius, the only evidence for his translation comes from a letter of Anastasius Bibliothecarius. Berschin 1990. On Anastasius's translation program in the ninth century, see: Neil 2006.

⁴² The manuscripts which contain the *miracula* are MS Vat. Lat. 5410, MS Rome Vallicell.H 8.2., and MS Rome Casanat. 1046, all of which are composed solely of material relating to the saints Cyrus and John, including the *passio* (also translated by Anastasius), prefatory material from Sophronius, and the account of the translation of their relics. On the other hand, the *passio* seems to have been more widely available, appearing in a ninth century *legendarium* now in the bibliothèque de la ville in Chartres but originally from the Abbey of Saint-Père (BM 063 [115 1/G]) and a tenth century collection of material relating to Rome and the Carolingian line now in Montpellier (Montpellier, Bibliothèque Inter-Universitaire, Section Médecine, H360).

⁴³ The fact that the *vita* of Barbatianus included some of the miracles from the *miracula* of Cyrus and John has been overlooked by scholars of both Bonifatius and Anastasius.

which the compiler of the *vita* formed this new text: rewriting the language, substituting locations and identities, and adopting and transforming characters from the *miracula*. With respect to rewriting, in general the author of the *vita* maintained a close affinity to the texts from which it was derived, yet used language and syntax that might be considered less ‘translationese’ than the rigid *ad verbum* found in Anastasius’s translation.⁴⁴ In this example, a man named Geddeo has become stricken with a urogenital fistula, and begins to seek the assistance of the saints.

| Sophronius, <i>Narratio miraculorum sanctorum Cyri et Joannis</i> 6 | Latin Translation of Anastasius Biblio- thecarius ⁴⁵ | <i>Vita s. Barbatiani</i> 8 ⁴⁶ |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Ἐκ τοῦδε ἡμᾶς τοῦ θεάματος, ἐπὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ θεωρίαν ὁ ναυλομάχος ἐφέλκεται, ὃ Γεδδαῖος μὲν ἦν ὄνομα, πάθος δὲ τὸ τῆς σύριγγος νόσημα, ὅπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ βουβῶνος ἐσχηκώς, ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν εἰπεῖν ἐδαμάζετο, αἰεὶ δι' αὐτοῦ μαστιζόμενος, καὶ κρουνηδὸν ἀπορρέων τὴν ἐκ παντὸς τοῦ σώματος ἐν αὐτῷ συναγομένην ὑγρότητα· ἀλλὰ ταύτης ὁ Γεδδαῖος ἀπαλλαγῆναι τῆς μαστίγος γλιχόμενος παντοίως τὰ τῶν ιατρῶν κατέτριβεν πρόθυρα· πρὸς ἐκείνους θειάζων καὶ συχρὰ προερχόμενος, οἱ τῶν πλειόνων διαφέρειν ἐλέγοντο.</p> | <p>Ex hoc spectaculo, ad sui considerationem nos naumachus adtrahit, cui Gegdaeus quidem fuerat nomen, passio uero, fistu- lae languor, quem habens in inguine sicut diei dono est afflicto est, ex eo jugiter flagella perpetiens humoris effluentibus gut- tis ibidem ex toto copore recollecti. Sed Gegdaeus de hoc supplicio eximi pentius cupiens, medi- corum atterbat uestibula, frequentans et iugiter procedens ad eos, qui multis praeferendi dice- bantur fistula confestim exiliit praecepto sancto- rum recognito, et fistulae cauitas statim repleta est martyrum mandatis obe- diens.</p> | <p>Eodem tempore fuit uir quidam nomine Geddeo, qui habebat in inguine fistulam. Ad hoc spectaculum ad sui considerationem nos attraxit. Passio uero languoris fistulae, quam habens in inguine ex eo iugiter flagella per- pessus humoris efflu- entibus guttis ibidem ex toto corpore col- lecti. Ex hoc supplicio eximi penitus cupiens medicorum adterebat uestibulo frequenans et iugiter procedens ad eos qui multis praefer- endi dicebantur.</p> |

⁴⁴ Although Anastasius claims that he aims for *ad sensum* translations, studies of his other works have found that he often maintains a close parallels to the Greek originals against common Latin usage; see Dionisotti 2005.

⁴⁵ Appears alongside the Greek edition of *Narratio miraculorum sanctorum Cyri et Joannis* of Sophronius in *PG* 87, 3242–3676.

⁴⁶ There are some significant variations in the manuscripts of the *vita*, but what is produced here is the edition of Lanzoni, who favored at times extreme normalization using the text of Anastasius as a model.

What can be noticed from this example is the very close way in which the Latin of Anastasius followed Sophronius' Greek original, with a clear effort to maintain a translation *ad verbum* even when the Greek may not have been entirely clear.⁴⁷ Perhaps the most visible example of this issue pertains to a possible manuscript error in Sophronius that offers the *hapax legomenon* of ναυλομάχος for the occupation of Geddeo. Lampe suggest that it was an error for, or a corruption of, ναυλοδόκ(χ)ος, 'a receiver of freights', although this term is also a rare in Greek.⁴⁸ Despite the uncertainty of its actual meaning, it is clear that the noun relates to the process of ναῦλος, the payment for shipping freight, which Anastasius transforms into what he perceives to be the most logical choice, *naumachus*, a marine or navel combatant.

Moving from this comparison to that of the text of Anastasius and the *vita* of Barbatianus, it is clear that the text of the *vita* has been reformatted to a significant degree to fit the idiom of a non-translated text of its period, and some details, such as Geddeo's occupation, are stripped from the narrative. While the order of events is similar between the *vita* of Barbatianus and the translation of Anastasius, a few differences suggest the plasticity adopted by the tenth-century author. The slavish adoption of Anastasius's *ex hoc spectaculo* (for ἐκ τοῦδε ... τοῦ θεάματος in Sophronius) in the first line is rendered in the *vita* with *ad hoc spectaculum* (and in some manuscripts *ad hoc expectaculum*).⁴⁹ The rest of this example suggests a direct and almost phrase-by-phrase translation by Anastasius, which in the *vita* is amended and abridged to fit the style of the other sections. Here, the flexibility in language seems geared towards making the miracle different in style but not in content, in an attempt to create ownership where specific details about Barbatianus do not appear.

⁴⁷ An additional issue may have been that Anastasius was working from an error ridden manuscript. This is perhaps noticeable in the fact that while he maintains at time a word-for-word translation, he turn a relatively simple name, Γεδδαῖος, into Gegdaeus, while the manuscripts of the *vita* of Barbatianus preserve a different transliteration in Geddeo. The struggle to deal with this name is likely also connected to its rarity, as it is known from no other Greek literary sources.

⁴⁸ Lampe 1961, p. 899. The noun ναυλοδόκος does not appear at all in the *TLG* and like ναυλομάχος, may be an entirely Byzantine Greek word.

⁴⁹ The use of *ad* in the Barbatianus text is odd, but may represent originally an accidental duplication following the subsequent *ad sui considerationem*.

Many sections taken from the *miracula* contain a direct reference to the relics of Cyrus and John; once transferred to the *vita* of Barbatianus, the typical solution is a simple replacement of the relics of two saints with a living one. In the seventh chapter of the *vita*, taken almost entirely from the *miracula*, a man named Minas is struck by terrible fevers:

Latin translation of the
Narratio miraculorum sanctorum
Cyri et Joannis 5

Vita s. Barbatiani 7

Hoc igitur per bis septem dies perpessus periculum, et et ultra ferre non ualens, ad Cyrum et Iohannem martyres confugit, eis uitam mortemque committens. Venit autem non pedibus, non iumento uectatus, non in phorii pilento considens, quae sedes est in qua deportari aegroti a non aegrescentibus assolent; nec enim sedere poterat, tam magno tumore interioribus eius extensis, ut noua uisio cerneretur; sed in lectulo reiacens a sedecim hominibus per uices porlatus est.

Qui dum per bis septem dies perpessus periculum et ultra ferre non ualens, ad sanctissimum uirum Barbatianum in cellula, ubi se applicuerat, confugit, et eidem uitam mortemque committens, et quando ad eum uenit, non pedibus neque furibo, in qua deportantur aegroti, nec sedere poterat, nec ambulare, sed in lectulo iacens a sedecim hominibus per uices portatus est.

In this case, *ad Cyrum et Iohannem martyres* is simply replaced with *ad santissimum uirum Barbatianum in cellula*. Other changes in this passage, including the simplification and rewording of the text, alter its language but does not affect the underlying meaning.

Beyond the modifications to language, two of the miracles taken from Sophronius's collection on Cyrus and John are woven into the details of characters which appear to be original to the *vita*, further claiming them as integral to Barbatianus's life. For example, a man named Theodorus is stuck with infirmities of the eyes in the *miracula* of Cyrus and John (miracle 2), but is transformed in the *vita* into an unnamed *manipula* who was a member of Galla Placidia's court for whom Galla personally requests the intervention of Barbatianus. In the final miracle tale of the *vita*, Barbatianus causes a man named Ursicius, who had planned to stab the saint in a fit of jealous rage, to be frozen in place. The story is set firmly in Ravenna, with the assassination set to take place on one of Ravenna's many bridges while the holy man travelled from the church of John the Baptist, where Barbatianus maintained his monastic cell, to offer alms to the poor provided by Galla Placidia.

Before he is able to complete his crime, Ursicius was frozen and remained so until Barbatianus returned from his task. This tale is neatly tied into the miracles adopted from Cyrus and John, as Ursicius is made the jealous husband of Theodora, who appears in both the *Miracula* of the Egyptian healers (miracle 9) and in the *vita* of Barbatianus (miracle 13). The root miracles formed a strong base on which to expand, and the addition of Theodora's husband further injects ownership of these miracles appropriated from Cyrus and John.

A number of narrative parts of the *vita* of Barbatianus made the text distinctive, from the framing set pieces of the discovery of Barbatianus hiding in Rome and his burial by Galla Placidia in Ravenna, to his help in obtaining a relic of John the Evangelist through a vision, and the many details of the patronage of the imperial family under his guidance. It was these elements which transformed the kernel of knowledge of his life and miracles adopted from a text about the relics of Cyrus and John into a tale affirming the centrality of urban monasticism to Ravenna's sacred status, and the connection between the city and patronage of the Roman imperial family, and with these a claim to some political authority.

At the end of the tenth century this would have been an important political statement: Otto I had favored the city and visited it a number of times, adjudicating disputes and reaffirming rights and charters of the Church in the city. In addition, the long serving bishop of Ravenna Peter IV (927–971) had been a close ally of Otto on his arrival to Italy and throughout his conflict with Berengar II, and the emperor appointed the archbishop's successor. However, although Otto favored the adoption of Italian saints within his own churches in Germany and likely took *spolia* from Ravenna's monuments back with him in the form of columns for his church in Magdeburg, his patronage of buildings and monasteries in Ravenna was slim during a period in which the dominant architectural projects were the construction and foundation of *campanili* (church towers).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* II.16 and 17: 'Multa sanctorum corpora imperator ab Italia Magadaburg per Dodonem capellanum suimet transmisit ... Preciosum quoque marmor cum auro gemmisque cesar precepit ad Magadaburg adduci. In omnibusque columnarum capitibus sanctorum reliquias diligenter

Otto's fascination with the cult of saints and the legitimacy it lent his own authority is also visible in the material produced in his court. The most famous example is the ivory plaque depicting Otto, surrounded and embraced by a group of haloed saints, presenting the cathedral of Magdeburg to Christ.⁵¹ It was with this context in mind that the *vita* of Barbatianus was designed; its authority found in visible monuments to the saint, his borrowed miracles, and his close proximity to Galla Placidia. Given these details, we may speculate that the *vita* was constructed as a means to promote the potency of the relics of Barbatianus, the importance of his monastic foundations (and Ravennate urban monasteries in general), and their connections to the Roman imperial family in an attempt to further bind the fate of Ravenna to that of the Ottonian dynasty.⁵²

5. *The afterlife of the legend of Barbatianus*

While the political power of the *vita* of Barbatianus fades along with the political prominence of Ravenna at the end of the tenth century, the relevance of his miracles and his importance as a monastic and ascetic saint builds and grows in the eleventh century. The *vita* begins to appear in many hagiographical collections throughout Romagna as well as in Tuscany, while the

includi jussit'. ('The emperor (Otto) had many bodies of saints brought from Italy to Magdeburg by his chaplain, Dodo ... [he] had precious marble, gold, and gems brought to Magdeburg. And he ordered that the relics of the saints should be enclosed in all of the columns'.) Trans. in Warner 2001. (Under II.16 and 17). Current scholarship suggests that Otto obtained the porphyry column for Magdeburg Cathedral from Ravenna; see Garrison 2012, p. 29–30. On the issue of the *campanile*, while most scholars have dated their creation to the ninth and tenth century new research suggests that some are being built as late as the twelfth century; see Romanelli 1998/9.

⁵¹ Metropolitan Museum of Art, 41.100.157. The piece commemorates the elevation of the see of Magdeburg to an archbishopric in 968 and was likely produced in Milan with a large number of other panels; 16 are still extant. Little 1986.

⁵² Even at the end of the tenth century during the short reign of Otto III this link was still being sought by the church of Ravenna, as evidenced by the commemoration of the emperors penance performed in the church of Sant'Apollinare Classe and his reaffirmation of the rights of the city's church and monasteries.

legend is integrated into the liturgical calendar of Rome. In the 1040s, the great reformer Peter Damian presented a sermon on the feast of Barbatianus mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and later in the century Hugutius of Pisa included seven lines on fanciful etymologies of Barbatianus's name in his *Agiographia*.⁵³ Physical monuments in the city of Ravenna continued to be produced: in the twelfth century, his image was included in the mosaic decoration of the city's newly refurbished cathedral, and in the fourteenth century he was included in a relief over the doorway of the church of San Giovanni Evangelista, depicting the moment in which Galla Placidia, flanked by Barbatianus, obtains the sandal relic from the saint.⁵⁴

The introduction of the *vita* of Barbatianus into hagiographic legends and lectionaries, and their subsequent regional diffusion, suggests that it was quickly incorporated into the traditional corpus of Ravennate saints. Along with other major Ravennate saints like Apollinaris and Severus, Barbatianus's *vita* was included in hagiographic collections found in Ravenna and Bologna (a city tied to Ravenna but with its own unique history and traditions), as well as Tuscany, and in particular in manuscripts connected to the monasteries of San Fidele di Strumi in Poppi, San Salvi in Florence, and San Bartolomeo in Pistoia.⁵⁵ The connection between these monasteries and the appearance of the *vita* of Barbatianus in their hagiographic collections was forged by those invested in propagating the cults of Ravenna's saints, the nobles of the city, who were involved in the establishment of these monasteries and other religious houses.

One manuscript in particular helps to illuminate the connections between Barbatianus and the appearance of his *vita* in Tuscany, now in the Biblioteca Medicea Laureziana, but originally from the monastery of San Fedele di Strumi in Poppi. A number of charters document the clear connection between this monastery and Ravenna through the Guidi, a noble family that traced

⁵³ Uguccione da Pisa 1978, p. 147.

⁵⁴ Verhoeven 2011, p. 83.

⁵⁵ The manuscript from San Fidele is now located in Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laureziana, Conv. soppr. 230; San Salvi in Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laureziana, Aed. 137, and San Bartolomeo in Rome, Biblioteca Casanatensis 718 (alias B. 1. 3).

its lineage to Tetgrimus, a count of northern origins closely allied with Hugh of Provence's second wife Alda, who marries into Ravenna's ducal family in the early tenth century. This family becomes a major patron of monastic houses in Tuscany, where Tetgrimus received the rights to govern the monastery of San Salvatore in Agna in Pistoia from Hugh in 927, and in Ravenna, where the family of his wife Ingelrada had provided donations directly to the Church and was connected to a number of small monastic houses in Ravenna, Rimini, Pesara and elsewhere. The monastery of San Fedele di Stumi was founded by the Guidi in 992 and was supported with donations from the family, who in this period had begun to center their holdings in Poppi and the surrounding area; their donations to the monastery through the fourteenth century linked them together long after the Guidi ceased to be associated with Ravenna.⁵⁶

The manuscript from San Fedele, which includes the *vita* of Barbatianus, is a compilation of six distinct extracts of predominantly hagiographic material from the eleventh through the thirteenth century; the *vita* appears at the beginning of the first section, and only as a fragment on the recto of the first folio (including the incipit and ending with the conclusion of the second chapter).⁵⁷ In a detailed study on the saints found in the hagiographical collections of the monastery, Pierluigi Licciardello noted the strong influence of saints from Emilia in the collections in general, which he suggests appear under the influence of the Vallombrosian order which took over San Fedele in 1085, who themselves shared a connection to the local saints of Ravenna. However, he notes the unique inclusion of the *vita* of Barbatianus, as the saint was not included in the other early liturgical manuscripts and calendars of the monastery (nor in the local collections of Arezzo or at Camaldoli).⁵⁸ Given its scarcity within the immediate region, it would seem fitting that the appearance of the *vita* of Barbatianus in a manuscript from San Fedele is a direct effect of the patronage of a Ravennate family, for whom the continued veneration of familiar saints may have

⁵⁶ Rauty 1996, 2009.

⁵⁷ Guglielmetti 2007, p. 237–242.

⁵⁸ Licciardello 2011.

stood as a means to reaffirm their own identities. The fact that he does not appear in other collections may then connect to the fate of the Guidi, who slowly begin to lose their local authority in Ravenna with the arrival of Otto I, and had abandoned political roles in the city entirely by the middle of the eleventh century.⁵⁹

Although *vita* was written to create a bond between the saints of the church of Ravenna and the imperial family, it came to be a means to affirm the identities of nobles aware of its local status; and on the other, in the hands of Peter Damian the legend of Barbatianus became a tool to reform the church of Ravenna itself. What is clear from his sermon is not that the exceptionality of Barbatianus rested in his relationship to the Empress, or represented something unique about Ravenna; rather, the authority of this saint rested in his treatment of the sick, in his healing miracles, and his desire for anonymity. As a model, it was Barbatianus who did not seek the glory of human praise, who did not desire the attention of men, who did not wish to appear himself admirable on account of the many miracles he performed, and who did not expect to be rewarded for the carrying out of so many services to the infirm. While the *vita* was original constructed to fulfill a specific goal and highlight the connection of the saint with the imperial family, in the hands of the citizens of Ravenna, it became important for other reasons and in these contexts the authority of Barbatianus is in the eye of his beholder.

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⁵⁹ Although the Guidi are almost absent from Ravenna's local affairs by the end of the tenth century, they appear as supporters of Peter Damian and donors to his monastic projects. Peter Damian, *eps.* 17 and 63.

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Abstract

The narrative of the *vita* of Saint Barbatianus, which describes the life of a holy man of Syrian origins in Italy in the fifth century, focuses on the miracles he is said to have performed in Rome and Ravenna, and details his relationship with the Empress Galla Placidia and his role as her confessor. While he was only a minor figure among local Ravennate saints in the centuries after his death, in the tenth century interest in his life increased and a *vita* was written by compiling a number of different sources together with two original miracles. The impetus for this new text was connected to the change in the position of Ravenna during great shifts in the political structure of northern Italy with the arrival of the Ottonians in the second half of the tenth century. For Ravennate monks and nobles, the *vita* of Barbatianus became a tool by which the citizens of the city and region and the visiting emperors and their retinues may be reminded of the importance of Ravenna as a locus of imperial political authority and take note of the city's urban monastic traditions.

The tale of Barbatianus would have had a powerful attraction for the local Ravennate archbishops, clergy, monks, and even nobles, as at its core the life depicts the reliance of Galla Placidia on a holy man, his intercessions on her behalf, and his miraculous cures. In the political climate of the tenth century, the successful rehabilitation of Barbatianus and promulgation of his *vita* created a meaningful

tool with which contemporary parallels could be drawn, and given that Ravenna had come to play an important role as regional center under the Ottonians (with imperial palaces and archbishops specifically selected by the emperors), the *vita* was a continuous reminder of the city's imperial connections. This particular effect was short lived, however, and in the eleventh century the legend of Barbatianus was reformatted to fit new models of authority. Through an examination of the creation of the *vita* of Barbatianus, the ways in which the text was originally fashioned to suit the practical needs of Ravenna in affirming the authority and position of the city and its institutions becomes visible.

JELLE LISSON

THE DARK SIDE OF REMEMBRANCE: HOW MEDIEVAL CHRONICLERS DEMONIZED BISHOP ADALBERO OF LAON (977–1033)*

Although historians, sociologists and anthropologists have not yet reached a consensus about a clear-cut definition of the concept *Authority*, they more or less agree on the fundamental features. An authoritative person has the capacity to exercise power over a group of people, whether established by force (law), by tradition (long-established customs) or by nature (a ‘higher power’ or the individual’s charisma). Case-studies about the concept usually tell a positive story, focusing for example on political rulers, ecclesiastical leaders or influential authors who are exceptionally skilled and who are generally accepted as being authorities or having authority. Consequently, it is investigated how the person’s authority was shaped, and which impact it had on contemporary and future society, considering authority as the logical outcome of someone’s behaviour and actions, as a characteristic that is inextricably bound with the individual himself.¹ However, this approach neglects the relational dimension of authority, since authority can only be established if there are others who attribute this characteristic to a person. In other words, one only becomes an authority if other people consider him or her as such.

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¹ Shapiro 2002.

To stress the decisive influence of contemporaries on the shaping of authority, I would like to focus on an individual who had the potential to become an authority – who was in other words ‘authority-worthy’ – but who failed to be remembered as such: Bishop Adalbero of Laon (977–1033). Even though he is mentioned in sources until the twelfth century and his writings were still read at the end of the twelfth century, he failed to live on in collective memory.² Yet, it seems that this did not happen because his significance in society was too small. Instead there are reasons to believe that the bishop was deliberately ‘demonized’ by medieval chronicles that painted a picture of Adalbero that was extremely negative, calling him a traitor, and even compared him to Judas, probably the greatest traitor in western history.³ Of course, it is generally known that medieval authors had an agenda of their own, but concerning Adalbero the unanimous disapproval is striking. Even recent historians have adopted the severe medieval value judgment, reducing Adalbero’s episcopacy to his act of treason.⁴ In this article I will therefore analyse these chronicles to unravel the various strategies and motives of the authors to scapegoat Adalbero of Laon.⁵

1. Introduction: *Was Adalbero of Laon authority-worthy?*

Obviously, first of all we need to verify whether Adalbero of Laon was actually ‘authority-worthy’. In this paragraph I will therefore provide background information about the bishop.

² Adalbero of Laon 1973, xix; Adalbero of Laon 1901, p. 79.

³ Richer of Rheims 2011; Hoffinan 2000; Gesta 1968, p. 393–525; Guibert of Nogent 1981; *Historia Francorum Senonensis*, 1968, p. 364–369; Adhemar of Chabannes, 1999.

⁴ Landes 1995, p. 5; Reuter & McKitterick 1999, p. 321; Theis 1999, p. 15–16; Sassier 1987, p. 231–235; Bur 1987, p. 52; Coolidge 1965, p. 52, 53, 55, 58; Iogna-Prat & Picard 1990, p. 344.

⁵ Claude Carozzi has already devoted a similar study to the ‘myth’ of Adalbero of Laon in an excellent article. However, he primarily looked at Richer’s *Historiae* and Guibert’s *De Vita Sua* as a source for late medieval epic. His explanation as to why Adalbero became a myth, differs from mine too: Carozzi 1976, p. 453–475. The question whether these sources are mutually independent is not at issue here, but the resemblances in words suggest that Richer’s narrative was known to all of the other authors.

He was a member of the Lotharingia-based house of Ardenne, an influential noble lineage with count palatine Wigeric of Lotharingia († 921) as the primogenitor. Through Wigeric's marriage to Cunegond – granddaughter of Louis II the Stammerer, king of *Francia* – the lineage was related to the royal Carolingian dynasty. During the tenth and eleventh century the influence of several relatives peaked; they owned various territories, titles and offices between the rivers Marne and Rhine.⁶ It was probably through mediation of his uncle – Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims – that Adalbero of Laon exercised the office of *regius notarius* ('royal chancellor'), a title recorded in several royal charters between 974 and 977.⁷ It seems this office also gave Adalbero the opportunity to gain access to the inner circle of the king of *Francia*, since he was elected bishop of Laon in 977 with explicit approval of king Lothair.⁸ It is worth mentioning that in this period no less than six other members of the Ardenne lineage with the same name entered an ecclesiastical career as well, occupying the episcopal sees of Metz, Verdun, Rheims, Laon and Trier.⁹ Although it is extremely difficult to determine whether family strategies were conceived as long-term projects by the family members themselves, the punctual resemblance between naming and office suggests that the Adalbero's of the Ardenne lineage were destined from birth to become bishops.¹⁰

The strategy proved successful, since Bishop Adalbero of Laon held his office almost continuously for more than fifty years.¹¹ From the death of Bishop Frameric of Théroutanne (964–995), Adalbero of Laon was the senior bishop in the church province of Rheims and maybe even in the entire French kingdom. Of course there is no direct evidence that the oldest bishop

⁶ Parisse 1981, p. 9–42; Parisse 1976, p. 848–849.

⁷ *Ego Adalbero, regius notarius*: Recueil des actes 1908, p. 53, 154, 155, 158, 160; Coolidge 1965, p. 7.

⁸ *Continuatio*: Flodoard of Rheims 1903, p. 163.

⁹ Bishop Adalbero I of Metz (929–954), Bishop Adalbero II of Metz (984–1005), Bishop Adalbero III of Metz (1047–1072), Bishop Adalbero of Verdun (984–988), Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims (969–989), Archbishop Adalbero of Trier (1004–1015).

¹⁰ Viazzi & Lynch 2002, p. 423–452; Le Jan 1995, p. 417.

¹¹ Although he was occasionally deprived of his office; Coolidge 1965, 60.

already had some kind of right of precedence over his provincial colleagues like in later times, but we cannot ignore the fact that Adalbero's name appears first after the archbishop of Rheims in all non-royal charters dating from this period.¹² The dioceses of Laon and Rheims also were the heartlands of the Carolingian kings and one of the few territories that remained under direct royal control in the tenth century – instead of being usurped by local aristocracy such as dukes and counts – with the city of Laon as the capital of France *avant-la-lettre*.¹³ It is for example no surprise that Hugh Capet tried to establish power in the Rheims–Laon area immediately after he was elected king of France in 987, at the expense of the last Carolingian descendant, Charles of Lower-Lorraine.¹⁴ In fact, Adalbero's involvements in political affairs are traditionally even regarded as the vital link in the transition of royal power from the Carolingians to the Capetians.

As the author of four treatises, Adalbero of Laon also turns out to be a very active writer.¹⁵ Despite his bombastic, difficult to digest style of writing, these texts show that the bishop had a thorough knowledge of Latin vocabulary, grammar and prosody.¹⁶ Moreover, after penetrating the layer of linguistic vagueness, he proves to be a critical, self-conscious writer who clearly knows the ways of the world. For example, Adalbero strikes out at the transformations that put the future of the world as he knew it at risk, such as the increasing power and independence of abbeys or the rise of *homines novi* ('new men') from lesser nobility as royal advisors.¹⁷ Most illustrious is Adalbero of Laon's contribution to the theory of the 'tripartite society', according to which the order of the world was a care-

¹² Ebalus of Rheims 1844, col. 1548–1550; Thietmar of Merseburg 1844, col. 1111–1112; *Gallia Christiana* 1751b, col. 362; Coolidge 1965, p. 69.

¹³ Hoffman 2000, p. 104.

¹⁴ Dunbabin 2000, p. 134.

¹⁵ Adalbero of Laon 1973; Adalbero of Laon 1901, p. 49–184; Adalbero of Laon 1982, p. 791–806.

¹⁶ Coolidge 1965, p. 110; Adalbero of Laon 1973, xix; Adalbero of Laon 1982, p. 791–806; Lehmann 1962, p. 316–318.

¹⁷ *Rythmus Satiricus de temporibus Rotberti regis* ('satirical song from the times of king Robert') against the *homo novus* Landric of Nevers: Lot 1903, p. 414–422; The *Carmen* against rex Odilo, the influential abbot of Cluny: Adalbero of Laon 1973, CXVI–CXVII.

fully graded and God-given hierarchy consisting of three well-defined groups: those who pray, those who fight and those who labour. Although vague notions of the three orders existed since the ninth century, Adalbero was the first author to develop a comprehensive framework, covering society as a whole. This concept, elaborated in his treatise, the *Carmen ad Rotbertum regem* ('Song for king Robert') has shaped social thinking for ages and even survived the medieval period.¹⁸ Finally, eleventh-century charters suggest that Adalbero was an ardent promotor of the peace movement in his diocese at the end of his life.¹⁹

It is tempting to conclude that Adalbero of Laon's talent was grossly overlooked in his own time, to be revealed in a Van Gogh kind of way only in recent times. However, plenty of contemporary sources present Adalbero as a respected bishop, as a meticulous administrator or even as a close friend, nuancing therefore the biased negative picture. For example, Adalbero issued several charters, donating land to the abbey of Saint-Vincent at Laon or founding a collegiate church dedicated to Saint-Laurent in Rozoy. These charters also show that Adalbero had a retinue of vassals (consisting of clerics and soldiers), that he was on friendly terms with the abbot of Saint-Vincent and that he successfully used his proximity to the royal court to obtain favours for his allies.²⁰ According to the letters of Gerbert of Aurillac – the archbishop of Rheims (991–995) and later pope Sylvester II (999–1003) – several people felt sympathetic towards Adalbero, such as Gerbert himself, Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims, Archbishop Egbert of Trier, King Hugh Capet of France, Queen Emma of France, the Empresses Adelaide and Theophanu of the Holy Roman Empire, Count Odo I of Blois and Count Heribert of Troyes.²¹ The renowned Bishop Fulbert of Chartres (1006–1028) – of whom an extensive letter collection has been preserved as well – repeatedly took counsel with

¹⁸ Carozzi 1978, p. 683–684; Oexle 1987, 1–43; Le Goff 1979, p. 1187–1215; Duby 1978; Hegener 1973, p. 31–38.

¹⁹ Coolidge 1965, p. 78–80; Head & Landes 1992; Barthelemy 1999.

²⁰ Dufour-Malbezin 2001, p. 83–91.

²¹ Gerbert of Aurillac 1961, p. 130–131, 135–136, 156, 161, 163, 170, 175, 177, 201, 214, 216–218, 237.

Adalbero of Laon, for example about medicine or about the appointment of bishops. Fulbert amicably addressed Adalbero as a ‘friend’, as an ‘eminent father to whom God has given an incomparable talent for effective persuasion’ and as a bishop ‘by whom virtue is possessed rather than professed.’²²

Dudo of Saint-Quentin even dedicated his *magnum opus De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum* (‘About the customs and deeds of the first Dukes of the Normans’) to Adalbero of Laon, written between 996 and 1015. The preface to the work is a lengthy laudation of the bishop, in which the author praises among other things Adalbero’s wisdom, noble birth and ‘meritorious acts’, presenting him as ‘a super eminent example of goodness to the world’ and ‘a pillar of God’s holy church, and thus a senator of the heavenly hall, adorned with an everlasting garland among the choirs of all the saints.’²³ Adalbero in his turn addressed a treatise on logic to co-bishop Fulk of Amiens (993–1030).²⁴ Adalbero’s epitaph – preserved at the abbey of Saint-Vincent in the city of Laon – suggests furthermore that the bishop attempted to influence his post-mortem reputation, enumerating the bishop’s benefactions during his episcopacy. For example, it is mentioned that he decorated the church of his cathedral city or that he gave land from his personal belongings to the episcopal see of Laon.²⁵ This shows that the bishop, or at least his entourage, aimed at him being remembered as a bishop who behaved as expected of an individual holding this office. In conclusion we can say that, although it is impossible to reveal the truth behind the accusations due to a lack of source material, there is conclusive evidence that Adalbero was authority-worthy. In other words, the one-sided negative approach deserves nuancing. What follows is a detailed analysis of five chronicles in which Adalbero of Laon is pejoratively mentioned.

²² Fulbert of Chartres 1976, p. 52–57, 82–83, 97, 192–193; Germain 2008, p. 113–132.

²³ Dudo of St-Quentin 1998, p. 3–6.

²⁴ Adalbero of Laon 1901, p. 178–184; Coolidge 1965, p. 110.

²⁵ *Gallia Christiana* 1751a, col. 522–523; Brunholz & Rochais 1996, p. 235.

2. *Richer of Rheims* – Historiarum Libri Quatuor

2.1. Analysis of the story

The most extensive chronicled report regarding Adalbero of Laon are the histories of Richer of Rheims, a monk in the abbey of Saint-Rémi in Rheims. In this text – edicated to Archbishop Gerbert of Aurillac – the author claims to discuss the *Gallorum congressibus* ('the wars of the Gauls').²⁶ More specifically, Adalbero plays a significant part in the paragraphs about the struggle for the throne of *Francia* between Hugh Capet, Duke of the Franks, and Duke Charles of Lower-Lorraine, the younger brother of the Carolingian King Lothair who had passed away in 986. In 987 Hugh was elected king through intercession of Adalbero of Rheims, who as archbishop of Rheims was in a favourable position to persuade the West-Frankish magnates to side with Hugh.²⁷ Although the traditional claim to the throne of the Carolingian family – descendants of the legendary Charlemagne – had already been disregarded more than once in the tenth century, the difference is that it would never be restored again after 987.

Concerning Adalbero, the first thing that catches the eye is that Richer only mentions the more turbulent episodes of the bishop's life. Firstly, immediately after the bishop was ordained in 977, rumours spread that Adalbero had committed adultery with Queen Emma, the wife of the West-Francien king Lothair. The allegations were not made publicly, but still a synod was held at Saint-Macre to discuss the matter.²⁸ At that point the manuscript is interrupted, but it is likely that Adalbero was not found guilty since he remained in his post and he did not fall out of favour with the king. Secondly, Richer mentions that in 991 Adalbero gave the final blow to Charles' chances to push Hugh aside and to regain the French crown. This story started three

²⁶ Richer of Rheims 2011; Hoffman 2000, p. 1–433; Richer of Rheims 1964; Kortum 1985, Glenn 2004; Babelon 1878.

²⁷ The archbishop of Rheims had the right to organize the election and to crown the king of Francia.

²⁸ *Eodem tempore E. r. (Emma regina) et Ad.(adalbero) L.(audunensis) episcopus infames stupri crimibantur* ('at that time, queen Emma and Bishop Adalbero of Laon were being accused of adultery'); Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 106–109.

years earlier, when Duke Charles had captured the episcopal city of Laon and had imprisoned Adalbero. Adalbero managed to escape, and to get even with Charles, he had come up with a plan to recapture the city and to take Charles prisoner himself. As his first step Adalbero approached archbishop Arnulph of Rheims (988–991 and 999–1021) – successor of Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims and nephew of Charles – pretending that he wanted to reconcile with Charles. Arnulph had faith in the bishop’s good intentions and agreed to present him to Charles. Then, Adalbero successfully went to king Hugh to seek for his approval of the plot. After some meetings between Adalbero and Charles, they came to an understanding and they swore an oath of fidelity. Finally Adalbero betrayed Charles and Arnulph by surprising them in their sleep and he delivered them both to king Hugh Capet.²⁹ Thirdly, Richer relates that in 995 Adalbero would have conspired with a local magnate to replace king Hugh Capet with a straw man of the German Emperor, because Adalbero wanted to become archbishop of Rheims himself. However, the conspiracy was discovered, Adalbero was accused of perjury and taken into custody as a traitor.³⁰ In retrospect, it seems credible that Richer wanted to spread the message that trouble is ahead whenever Adalbero of Laon enters the stage.

Complementary to the selection of specific events, the choice of words directs the reader to a particular interpretation of the story, indicating that Richer had no sympathy for Adalbero’s actions. For example, the author consistently uses words and phrases with a negative connotation in relation to the bishop of Laon, referring to such things as trickery, betrayal, plots, allegations, lies, deceit or discord.³¹ This way, Richer creates

²⁹ Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 228–241, 279–301.

³⁰ *Periurii vero reatus in the redundabit* (‘the guilt of perjury will be upon your head’); *utpote desertor custodibus datur* (‘taken into custody as a traitor’): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 404–415.

³¹ *Crimibantur* (‘being accused of’); *eorum tantae infamiae* (‘such a scandalous allegation’); *a tanta suspitione* (‘against this very serious suspicion’); *transfuga et desertor* (‘traitor and deserter’); *legatos fallentes* (‘deceitful envoys’); *decipisse, deceptorum* (‘deceiving’), *dolus, doli, dolos* (‘trick, deception’); *dissidentia* (‘disagreement’); *discordia* (‘discord’); *suspectum* (‘suspicion’); *proditoris* (‘traitor’); *proditione* (‘betrayal’), *fraude, fraudium* (‘trickery’), *plurima quaesieris* (‘several lies’); *contra*

a negative atmosphere around the events. The author also makes very clear from the start that a happy ending for Arnulph and Charles was out of the question. The first sentence of the paragraphs after Adalbero had escaped from captivity, for instance, already states that ‘Adalbero used all of his cunning to try to find an opportunity to get even by capturing Laon and taking Charles prisoner.’³² Also the rest of the narration – about the betrayal of Charles in 991 as well as of Hugh in 995 – is peppered with flash-forwards to the climax of the story, emphasizing the treacherous character of Adalbero’s actions.³³

Not only was it immediately plain that Adalbero of Laon would eventually betray Charles of Lower-Lorraine, Richer also portrays the bishop as the cunning architect of a carefully orchestrated plot. On the one hand the author suggests that Adalbero was the initiator of the plot and that he executed his ambitious plans little by little. On the other hand all the other parties involved – Charles, Arnulph and Hugh Capet – are represented as ignorant victims who have to endure Adalbero’s wicked machinations. For example, it was Adalbero who insisted on revenge because he wanted to get even with Charles by recapturing the city of Laon and taking him prisoner. Archbishop

regi infausta moliri ‘(plotting some mischief against the king’); *periurii* ‘(perjury)’; *criminator* ‘(the accused)’; and again *desertor* ‘(traitor)’: Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 106, 238, 278, 280, 282, 286, 294, 296, 404, 406, 410, 414.

³² *Adalbero [...] omni ingenio oportunitatem quaerebat qua versa vice et Laudunum caperet et Karolum comprehenderet*: Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 278.

³³ *Arnulphus simulatam fidem nesciens, legatos fallentes excipit et utpote boni alicuius nuntios humanissime honorat* ‘(unaware that Adalbero’s profession of loyalty was insincere, Arnulph welcomed the deceitful envoys as though they were the messengers of some good man)’; *illi se decepisse letati* ‘(delighted that they had succeeded in deceiving him)’; *tantos ibi demonstrates affectus animi ut nulla simulatio, nullus dolus videretur* ‘(demonstrating such affection that there was no sign of pretense or deceit)’; *Adalbero, penes quem simulationis color et doli onus erat, incautum sic prior alloquitur* ‘(Adalbero, adopting a duplicitous facade and taking upon himself the task of deceit, addressed the unwary Arnulph)’; *quare ignotus cunctos latuit* ‘(therefore his true character remained hidden to everyone)’; *tanta cautela calliditatis usus ut omnino dolum simulationis colore obvelaret* ‘(making such careful use of his cunning that he kept his treacherous intentions completely hidden behind a deceitful façade)’; *nox futuri luctus et proditiōis conscia instabat* ‘(a night that was soon to know both grief and betrayal)’; *Adalbero, sui doli conscius* ‘(Adalbero, plotting treachery)’: Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 279, 292, 294, 296.

Arnulph – whom Richer calls ‘unaware’ thrice³⁴ – believed that Adalbero’s loyalty was sincere and he was additionally enthused by the bishop’s promises of friendship and peace in the realm.³⁵ Charles only agreed to meet Adalbero because he trusted his nephew Arnulph,³⁶ while Hugh was not informed until Adalbero had already set the plan in motion. He intervened only when Adalbero explicitly asked him to.³⁷ Also background figures are used to underline Adalbero’s intentionality, such as the doorkeeper ‘who knew nothing of the plot’ or the citizens of Laon who were only disloyal to their bishop because he ‘was imposing unfair tax burdens on their lands.’³⁸ A similar strategy applies to the story about Adalbero’s betrayal of king Hugh Capet in 995, since it was the bishop who had ‘devised the scheme.’³⁹

³⁴ *Arnulphus, simulatam fidem nesciens* (‘Arnulph, unaware that his [Adalbero’s] profession of loyalty was insincere’); *Adalbero incautum sic prior alloquitur* (‘Adalbero addresses the unwary Arnulph’); *Adalberonem [...] deceptorem nesciens Arnulph* (‘Unaware that he had been duped by Adalbero’): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 278.

³⁵ *In hac lingua et manu pax sita est et dissidentia* (‘Peace and discord alike depend upon my words and my deeds’); *ex quibus duobus tertium elucebit. Nam cum et vobis gratia regum, et mihi Karoli reddetur, per nos consequenter aliorum utilitas comparabitur* (‘From our mutual advantage a third benefit will be clear. For when you have acquired the favor of the king, and I have won the favor of Charles, others will benefit in turn from what we have done’): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 278, 280.

³⁶ *Karolus nepoti favens* (‘Charles, yielding to his nephews wishes’): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 284.

³⁷ *Adalbero regi se contulit, quae aegerat explicans, quibus rex auditis, negotium approbat* (‘Adalbero went before the king to explain what he had done. After listening to his account, the king approved of his actions’); *Adalbero regi Silvanectim legatos otius mittit* (‘Adalbero quickly sent messengers to the king at Senlis’); *unde et sine mora cum quotcumque possit veniat* (‘Thus he told the king to come at once with as many men as possible’): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 286, 298.

³⁸ *Hostiarium huius doli ignarum* (‘a doorkeeper who knew nothing of his plot’); *quo tempore Adalbero, suis civius plus iusto iniurias de lege agraria irrogabat. Unde quidam ab eo latenter animo deiscedentes* (‘at that time Adalbero was imposing unfair tax burdens on the lands of the citizens. As a result, some of them had developed a secret hostility toward the bishop’): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 296, 228.

³⁹ *Per quosdam regibus indicatum est Adalberonem Laudunensem episcopum haec dolo ordinasse; omnino etiam apud Odonem illud pridem pertractasse* (‘a scheme devised by Adalbero of Laon, who in fact had worked out the whole thing with Odo some time ago’): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 406.

Richer repeated this accusation by integrating it into an (invented) speech of the king and he claims that Adalbero admitted his guilt himself.⁴⁰

2.2. Fidelity and oaths

Richer writes about Adalbero of Laon's betrayal of Charles of Lower-Lorraine, but he focusses especially on the broken oath of fealty. In fact, the bishop would even have sworn four oaths. The first one was taken in 988 when Adalbero was Charles' prisoner at Laon. Richer refers to that oath, quoting Adalbero that he 'was aggrieved that people were calling him a traitor and a deserter because he had failed to render service to Charles after pledging fealty to him' and that he 'wished to be reconciled with his highness and to be friends with Charles, who was, after all, his lord.'⁴¹ Given the outcome of the event – another act of treachery by Adalbero – it can be no coincidence that Richer puts these prophetic words in the mouth of the bishop himself. Adalbero also used the promise of a future oath to persuade Arnulph into arranging a meeting with Charles.⁴² A second oath was sworn at the first meeting between Adalbero and Charles, in the presence of Arnulph, to confirm their renewed friendship.⁴³ Next, Arnulph reconciled with king Hugh, and Adalbero went to see Charles at Laon. There Charles sought 'guarantees of Adalbero's loyalty' and again the bishop swore fealty, placing his right hand upon holy relics.⁴⁴ Richer adds that the oath

⁴⁰ *Episcopus, utpote a conscio convictus, rem ita esse quaerenti confessus est* ('When questioned, the bishop, whose guilt had now been established by someone with knowledge of the affair, admitted the truth to him'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 408.

⁴¹ *Sibi etiam iniuriae esse quod transfuga et desertor diceretur, eo quod Karalo post fidem factam non obsecutus sit; et si vacuum sibi esset, a se id dedecoris velle abicere. Ad eius celsitudinem redire velle et Karoli amicitiam utpote domini sese optare*: Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 278.

⁴² *De quibus si quid ei dubium visum fuit, post dicite probandum sacramentis* ('If he appears to doubt anything that you say, tell him that at a future date he may confirm my fidelity through oaths'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 282.

⁴³ *His dictis, sacramento sibi annexi sunt* ('This said, they bound themselves to one another with oaths'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 286.

⁴⁴ *De securitate fidei* ('guarantees of Adalbero's loyalty'); *adsunt sancta, superponite dexteram, fidem contra omnes spondete* ('Behold the holy relics, place your

was the sole reason that people regained their trust in Adalbero, alluding once again to the bishop's future betrayal. The last, most meaningful oath was sworn 'one night as Adalbero sat at dinner.'⁴⁵ Richer also states that in 995 king Hugh Capet had charged Adalbero with violating his oath of fealty, explicitly referring to the more juridical term 'perjury'.⁴⁶

In contrast with the treacherous character of Adalbero's actions, Richer systematically uses words such as reconciliation, loyalty, friendship, affection, support and glory, to emphasize that these oaths need an environment of trust to be relevant.⁴⁷ In other words, the author implies that Adalbero has not merely cancelled a formal agreement with a stranger, but he has betrayed a friend and an ally. Moreover, Richer strengthens the significance of the oaths with symbolic references. For example, the informal meetings between Adalbero on the one hand and Arnulph and Charles on the other, are concluded by kissing and embracing one another, as a visual confirmation of their

right hand upon them and swear fealty to me over and against all men'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 290, 292.

⁴⁵ *Cum nocte quadam inter cenandum hilaris resideret* ('One night as Adalbero sat at dinner in high spirits'); *fidem faciam* ('I swear fealty'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 294, 296.

⁴⁶ *Si fidem regibus re servasse non dubitas* ('If you are certain that you have always preserved your oath of fealty to the kings'); *evidentissime fidem abruptisti* (it is very clear you have violated your oath); *unde et periurii reatu detineris* ('implicating yourself in the crime of perjury'); *periurii vero reatus in re redundabit, cum tu solus regibus nesciis iuratus sis* ('the guilt of perjury will be upon your head, because you swore the oath by yourself, without informing the king'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 406, 410.

⁴⁷ *Tantos ibi demonstrates affectus animi ut nulla simulatio, nullus dolus videretur* ('Demonstrating such affection that there was no sign of pretense or deceit'); *amicitiam fidem, suppetarium subsidia mandat* ('assure him of his friendship, loyalty and support'); *velle reconciliare* ('wanted to be reconciled'); *redire velle et Karoli amicitiam* ('wanted to be reconciled and to be Charles' friend'); *ius amicitiae* ('the mutual obligations of their friendship'); *Karolo amicitia* ('Charles friendship'); *quanta etiam commoditas sit profutura si amicitia bene usi sint, sepenumero retulere; quanta quoque gloria, quantus honor, quantum presidium* ('they made frequent mention of the benefits that they would enjoy if they properly exploited their friendship, as well as the glory, honor and mutual protection that would be afforded to them'); *a quo tempore regis et Karoli reconciliationem atque favorem quaerebat* ('From that time forward Arnulph sought to reconcile Charles and the king and to remain in their good graces'); *benivolentiam* ('goodwill'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 278, 280, 286, 290, 294.

renewed relationship of friendship.⁴⁸ Adalbero also appealed to the holy saints as witnesses, by swearing fealty to Charles on holy relics.⁴⁹ However, the last oath mentioned carries the most weight. During supper, on the day before Jesus Christ was crucified, Charles mixed broken bread with wine in a golden cup; he referred to the decrees of the holy fathers; and he asked Adalbero to empty the cup. If, however, Adalbero did not intend to keep his promises, Charles instructed Adalbero to refuse the cup, so he would not recall the terrible image of the traitor Judas. Adalbero then took the cup, drank it and said: 'I swear fealty, otherwise I may perish with Judas.'⁵⁰ Besides the literal comparison to Judas, other elements in the story resemble the apostle's betrayal of Jesus Christ as well, such as the dinner among friends on the day before Jesus was crucified (the Last Supper) and the mixing of broken bread and wine (the Eucharist). This way Richer puts Adalbero's betrayal on a par with what may

⁴⁸ *Amplexibus pluribus atque osculis sibi congratulantes* ('Greeting one another joyfully with numerous embraces and kisses'); *at postquam satis amplexationum, osculorum satis factum est* ('when they had finished embracing and kissing one another'); *Datisque strictim osculis* ('after they had kissed one another closely'); *ab eo osculum accepit* ('he was received with a kiss'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 280, 282, 286.

⁴⁹ *Adsint sanctorum reliquiae, paratus sum fidem facere* ('I am ready to swear fealty to him before the relics of the saints'); *adsunt sancta, superponite dexteram, fidem contra omnes spondete* ('Behold the holy relics, place your right hand upon them and swear fealty to me over and against all men'); *super sancta dextram extendit, non veritus iurare quodcumque propositum fuit* ('he extended his right hand over the holy relics and swore whatever was put to him without fear'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 282, 292.

⁵⁰ 'One night as Adalbero sat at dinner in high spirits, Charles took a golden cup, into which he had crumbled bread mixed with wine, and after careful reflection he offered it to him, saying, "Since today, in accordance with the decrees of the fathers, you have consecrated the palm branches, blessed the people with your holy benedictions, and offered the Eucharist to us, and because this is the day of the passion of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, setting at naught the slanders of those who whisper that you are not to be trusted, I extend to you this vessel, suitable for a man of your stature, which contains wine and broken bread. Drink up this cup as a sign of the fealty that you owe me and which you will preserve toward me. If, however, you do not intend to remain faithful to me, then abstain from drinking lest you recall the terrible image of the traitor Judas". In response Adalbero said: "I will take the cup and drink the draft freely". Charles then told him to say in addition, "I will pledge fealty", and so, drinking from the cup, Adalbero added: "I will pledge fealty otherwise I may perish with Judas": Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 294, 296.

be the most disgraceful treason in the history of the western world. It is also noteworthy that Richer switches positions, since Charles takes the place of the priest who now administers the Eucharist to a bishop.⁵¹

At first sight, we do not have to guess why Richer paints a negative picture of Adalbero of Laon. Given the emphasis on the principle of oath swearing, it seems reasonable that Richer thought badly of Adalbero because the bishop had failed to live up to his promise of loyalty. Indeed several historians have contextualized medieval rituals, concluding that oaths were an instrument to create ties between individuals. These ties implied mutual obligations for those involved and were externalized in ritualized ceremonies.⁵² According to Geoffrey Koziol, close comparison of events in Richer's *Historiae* with Flodoard's *Annales* even shows that the former was particularly fond of rituals, idealizing a political order founded on consensus and good faith. For example, when Louis d'Outremer was welcomed as the new king of *Francia* by the magnates, Richer embellishes the rather concise report of Flodoard with invented details, such as an oath of the magnates to Louis and a welcome reception of the new king in all the cities. Next, Richer explains the sudden decline of Louis' prosperous reign by declaring that the king started to ignore the advice of his 'loyal magnates.' This is also how Koziol thinks we must understand Richer's aversion to Adalbero of Laon: sincerity – which the bishop obviously lacked – was a prerequisite to enter into the rites of loyalty, otherwise order was not possible.⁵³ In other words, Richer promulgates the idea that faithful oaths were the glue that kept medieval society together.

However, if this truly caused Richer's animosity towards Adalbero, at least the author was not very consistent, since he does not treat a similar case of treason in the same way. In the paragraphs before the account of Adalbero's treason, Richer expands on how Arnulph was ordained as archbishop

⁵¹ This way, Richer portrays Charles as a Jesus-like figure, confirming Adalbero's resemblance to Judas: Carozzi 1976, p. 471–476.

⁵² Althoff, Fried & Geary 2002; Theuvs & Nelson 2000; Rollo-Koster 2002; Hen & Innes 2000; Geary 1994.

⁵³ Koziol 1992, p. 116.

of Rheims and how Charles managed to capture the city of Laon. Intrinsically, the story looks very similar to that of Adalbero. At first, Arnulph approached members of the royal court and promised among other things that he would abandon his uncle and pledge fealty to king Hugh.⁵⁴ Arnulph was indeed given the archbishopric of Rheims, on condition that he swore an oath to the king.⁵⁵ To corroborate the oath, a chirograph was prepared and signed, containing 'an anathema of malediction that calls down upon him humiliation instead of happiness, ruin instead of prosperity, disgrace instead of good repute, a short span of life instead of longevity, contempt instead of honour, and to sum up, every type of misfortune in place of every good thing.'⁵⁶ For the king the oath and the chirograph sufficed, but the bishops of the archdiocese of Rheims demanded additional provisions. That is why Arnulph publicly pronounced a curse during the celebration of the Eucharist, condemning himself if he would ever violate his oath to king Hugh.⁵⁷ Just like with Adalbero, Richer states that the oaths were the reason that Arnulph could convince the contemporaries of his good intentions.⁵⁸ In the end, Arnulph devised a plan to give the city

⁵⁴ *Karolum quoque patrum sese deserturum mandat, fidem spondet* ('he gave notice that he would abandon his uncle Charles and pledge fealty (to the king)'): *qui de fide habenda erga regem sciscitatus, ad omnium vota modestissime respondit* ('when he was asked whether he would remain loyal to the king, he responded very humbly and to the satisfaction of everyone there'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 248, 254.

⁵⁵ *Sacramenti auctoritate mihi conexus sit* ('he is bound to me by the sanction of an oath'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 257.

⁵⁶ *In quo maledictionis anathema habeatur huiusmodi, quod ei imprecetur pro felleibus contumeliosa, pro salutaribus perniosa, pro honestis turpia, pro diuturnitate punctum, pro honore contemptum, et ut totum concludatur, pro omnibus bonis omnia mala*: Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 257.

⁵⁷ *Quod cum regi penitus sufficeret, episcopis tamen, ut fertur, non satis id visum est nisi illud etiam adderetur, ut in missarum celebratione eukaristiam a sacerdote sumeret, eamque perditionis causam sibi imprecando coram optaret si fidem violando umquam desertor fieret. Quod et factum fuit* ('while this was sufficient for the king, the bishops reportedly would not be satisfied unless an additional provision was made that during the celebration of the mass Arnulph would receive the Eucharist from a priest and publicly pronounce a curse against himself, asking that he suffer damnation if he ever violated his oath and proved a traitor to his word. And this, too, was done'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 258.

⁵⁸ *Quod tandem regi et primatibus fidem fecit* ('this finally won him the trust of both the king and the magnates'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 258.

of Rheims to his uncle Charles. In his description Richer emphasized that the archbishop had broken his oath to the king.⁵⁹

Nonetheless, despite the striking similarities between Adalbero's and Arnulph's treason, Richer does not portray the archbishop as the devil incarnate that he makes of Adalbero. The author even appears to have some sympathy for Arnulph, but he hides his positive comments in the speeches of his characters. For example, Hugh Capet motivates his choice for Arnulph as archbishop by arguing that he was the 'sole surviving member of the *royal line*' who had 'asked to be granted some title of honour so that the name of his distinguished father might not be blackened by oblivion.'⁶⁰ Richer puts these words into the mouth of the king, implying that even the Capetians acknowledged the Carolingians as true heirs to the royal throne. In other words, Arnulph had every right to claim the archiepiscopal see of Rheims because of his Carolingian blood, which could be interpreted as if Arnulph should never even have been forced to renounce his uncle in the first place. As a result, Arnulph's broken oath of fealty to the king was still wrong, but at least he had a good reason for his actions. Additionally, Richer stresses that Charles was Arnulph's only surviving relative.⁶¹ Again it

⁵⁹ *Querebat quonam modo in culmen honoris illum provehere posset, sic tamen ut ipse regis desertor non appareret* ('he sought to find a way to advance him (Charles) to the height of power without seeming to be a traitor to the king'); *itaque factum foret ut et regia potestas infirmaretur, et patruo virtus dominandi augesceret, nee ipse desertor videretur* ('in this way the king's power would be weakened and his uncle's authority increased, while he himself would not be revealed as a traitor'); *Arnulphus alia pro aliis dans, quod vere molitur penitus dissimulat. Ad quid potius intendat, omnes ignorant* ('Arnulph completely deceived them about the nature of their mission, keeping his true intentions hidden, so that no one had any idea what he was actually planning'); *pium affectum nullomodo produnt* ('keeping their true feelings of mutual devotion completely hidden'); *Karolo exinde in omnibus favit. Ius quoque fidei regi servandum penitus abruptit* ('Thereafter he supported Charles in all that he did and completely violated the oath of fealty that he had sworn to the king'); Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 262, 264, 266, 268.

⁶⁰ Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 254.

⁶¹ *illud tam en infortunii genus arbitrabatur, quod ipse superstes de patrio genere nullum preter Karolum habebat* ('he regarded it as a stroke of misfortune that he had no one left to him out of his father's family except for Charles'); *patruo itaque miserescibat, illum cogitabat, illum colebat, illum pro parentibus carissimum habebat* ('Arnulph pitied his uncle, thought about him, treated him with affection, and cherished him as his dearest relative in place of his own parents'); Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 262; also Charles' motives are said to be rooted in

seems as if Richer attempted to put a gloss on Arnulph's treason, since the archbishop was trying to help his uncle instead of selfishly striving for improvement of his own position.⁶² Richer also interpolates the story with a paragraph questioning the legitimacy of one of Arnulph's oaths. In this paragraph he clearly sides with the 'men of purer intention', who criticized the practice of forcing someone into swearing an oath during Eucharist, which they considered contrary to canon law and the decrees of the fathers.⁶³ Finally, Richer also left out several elements of the story – known from other sources – that put Arnulph in a bad light.⁶⁴ It seems therefore that the author wanted to weaken the weight of Arnulph's broken oath to king Hugh.

The doubts about the significance of oath swearing in tenth-century society are corroborated by other contemporary sources. Flodoard of Rheims for instance – describing annually the important events in Rheims between 919 and 966 in his *Annales* – often mentions cases of treason without much fuss.⁶⁵ Both Flodoard's stoicism and the frequency of oath breaking leads one to suspect that treason was committed regularly in contemporary political relations. At first sight, the letter collection of Gerbert of Aurillac creates the impression that oaths were really as important as Richer suggested. For example, Bishop Thierry of Metz condemns his relative Charles in the strongest possible terms for seizing the city of Laon and thus violating his oath to king Hugh, using all the ingredients we already saw in Richer's *Historiae*: it is held against Charles that he is a 'shameless violator of fidelity,' a 'desertor,' a 'liar' and a man 'with bloody hands always ready for all crime;' Charles had been badmouthing about Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims, Bishop of Laon and Queen

'hope for the restoration of his father's line': *in quo solo spes restituendi genus paternum*: Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 262.

⁶² Le Jan 1995, p. 83–85.

⁶³ *Nonnullis tamen quorum mens purgatio erat nefarium et contra fidei ius id creditum est* ('nonetheless there were some men of purer intention who considered this procedure wicked and contrary to tenets of the faith'); *ex decretis patrum et canonum scriptis* ('according to the decrees of the fathers and the text of the canons'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 260.

⁶⁴ Glenn 2004, p. 111.

⁶⁵ Flodoard of Rheims 2004.

Emma, ‘by simulating a serpent’s hiss,’ the oath was sworn with a saint as witness (the altar of Saint-John), in the presence of Bishop Notger of Liège and other magnates; Charles had ‘despised divine law;’ and Charles had failed to ‘follow the footsteps of his noble ancestors.’ For all this, Bishop Thierry threatened Charles with excommunication.⁶⁶ In response, however, Gerbert wrote a letter in the name of Charles, declaring that Thierry had confused divine and human rights ‘in his babbling about laws;’ that Charles had the support of several noble men; and that he was the hereditary king. Next, Gerbert hurled similar reproaches at Thierry, calling him ‘the archetype of hypocrites,’ a ‘faithless murderer of emperors and their offspring’ and ‘an enemy of the state’. It is said that Thierry himself also violated an oath to his king Otto III (public perjury), therefore Gerbert addresses him as ‘a greedy wolf, or more correctly, another Judas.’⁶⁷

On the one hand, it is tempting to conclude that oaths indeed structured aristocratic relationships in the tenth century. Why else would the contemporaries attach such great importance to the violation of oaths? On the other hand, the texts of Richer, Flodoard and Gerbert show that oath breaking was a frequent phenomenon. Even the strong comparison to Judas was common. Moreover, the attitude against infidelity was not always consistent. For example, close reading of the correspondence between Thierry and Charles – heaping a cartload of similar accusations upon each other – indicates that truth was essentially in the eye of the beholder. This corresponds to Richer’s equivocal treatment of Adalbero’s and Arnulph’s treason: the same act of breaking an oath is condemned if done by an adversary, ignored or glossed over if done by an ally. For example, from a different perspective Adalbero of Laon’s ‘betrayal’ of Charles could might have well been represented as the act of a glorious hero whose courage, vigour and intelligence have prevented a violent usurper to deceive the legitimate king. A striking example of the interpretation of oath breaking as strategy is

⁶⁶ Gerbert of Aurillac 1961, p. 76–79.

⁶⁷ Gerbert of Aurillac 1961, p. 79–81.

a phrase in Gerbert's letter to Thierry: 'you wish to clear yourself by accusing someone else.'⁶⁸ In other words, the accusation of treason first and foremost was a political instrument to sully the reputation of enemies. This does not imply that fidelity was considered trivial and meaningless – it remains likely that the idea was widespread that oaths symbolized a sacred bond turning strangers into allies and friends, otherwise breaking them would not be considered such a scandalous act – but there was a yawning gap between theory and practice. Flexibility is the key word of tenth-century society.

2.3. Richer's coloured view

Whereas the accusation of treason was primarily used as a political instrument, Adalbero of Laon's broken oath cannot be regarded as the principal cause of Richer's animosity towards the bishop. However, Richer's distinct disapproval of Adalbero's actions demonstrates that he is not afraid of giving his opinion about the events he describes, explaining the characters' motives and judging their deeds. In the context of the explosive political situation in tenth-century Rheims, this gives us the opportunity to discover the author's personal political preferences. After all, it would be naive to think that Richer did not have an opinion about the conflict taking place in his own backyard, between the supporters of Charles – mostly inspired by adherence to the Carolingian dynasty – and those of Hugh Capet.⁶⁹ The political position of Richer has indeed been heavily debated by scholars in the last two centuries, yet without a widely supported conclusion. On the one hand, it seems that Richer supported the Capetians. For example, he expands on the lives of the archbishops Adalbero of Rheims and Gerbert of Aurillac in two separate paragraphs with a hagiographical bias and these archbishops were loyal allies of Hugh.⁷⁰ In 888, a predecessor of Hugh Capet was elected king of the western Franks and Richer evaluates his kingship positively, so without defending the Caro-

⁶⁸ Gerbert of Aurillac 1961, p. 80.

⁶⁹ Dumas 1944, 5–38; Lot 1981, p. 272–277; Lot 1903, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 63–106.

lingian dynasty or even mentioning their right to the throne.⁷¹ On the other hand, there are indications that Richer supported the Carolingians. With a certain pride he briefly refers to his own father, who has served as a knight and a nobleman under three successive Carolingian kings.⁷² As said before he also expresses his sympathy for Charles and Arnulph, whom he portrays as fighting for a just cause while in Richer's view Adalbero had no reason whatsoever to justify his actions.⁷³

Although there are several arguments to support both interpretations, Jason Glenn has recently gapped the contradiction with a convincing hypothesis, combining textual evidence with palaeographical and codicological research. He assumes that Richer during the first part of the writing process essentially belonged to the Carolingian camp, but that he needed to camouflage his personal preferences because of the delicate political situation. At some point it must have become clear that Hugh had permanently pushed Charles (and the whole Carolingian family) aside, so Richer had to change his manuscript to conceal his true opinion.⁷⁴ In no way the author could have openly attacked the king without standing in fear for his life, so he needed a scapegoat to blame with the fall of the Carolingian family. Since Adalbero of Laon's actions were the final blow for Charles to become king, Richer's hidden Carolingian sentiments would explain the demonization of the bishop. As a consequence of Adalbero's actions, the last Carolingian descendent was delivered to King Hugh and held in captivity until his death, clearing the way for stability in the kingdom under the rule of the new, Capetian dynasty. In other words, it seems that the negative picture of Adalbero painted by Richer was the result of the author's political sympathy for Adalbero's opponent.

⁷¹ *Communi decreta Odonem, virum militarem et strenuum, in basilica sancti regem creant* ('they made Odo, a vigorous warrior, their king by communal decree'): *strenue atque utiliter omnia gessit* ('he carried out all of his tasks vigorously and successfully'): Richer of Rheims 2011, I, p. 21.

⁷² Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 10–15.

⁷³ For a detailed analysis of the research on Richer's bias, see: Glenn 2004, p. 4–7.

⁷⁴ Glenn 2004, p. 90–128, 166–167.

3. *The deeds of the bishops of Cambrai*

Adalbero of Laon is also mentioned in the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium*, a history of the bishops of Cambrai from the fifth until the eleventh century, which was written about the years 1024–1025. The work consists of three parts: a general history of the diocese; a list of the local religious communities; and the episcopacy of Bishop Gerard of Cambrai (1021–1051).⁷⁵ The unknown author of the *Gesta* names Adalbero thrice in the third part. First, he reports that Adalbero had accused bishop Harduin of Noyon of all kinds of crimes, but it turns out that Harduin only committed these crimes because he had followed the advice of Adalbero himself.⁷⁶ Next, the chronicler describes the appointment of Archbishop Ebulus of Rheims, a layman who had been Adalbero's secretary. According to Gerard, this appointment was unlawful since Ebulus was not ordained yet when he was elected.⁷⁷ Finally, the full text of three letters is integrated, in which Gerard accuses Adalbero of simony. Adalbero would have tried to sell his episcopal see to a certain Wido, the nephew of Bishop Wido of Soissons, but the deal was prevented because Gerard had sent letters of complaint to the parties involved.⁷⁸ It immediately catches the eye that – just like Richer of Rheims – the Cambrai chronicler has only selected stories in which bishop Adalbero played a dubious part.

Likewise as well, the choice of words criminalizes the events in which bishop Adalbero is involved, talking about crimes, rumours, accusations, damnations, anathemas, usury, simony and heresy.⁷⁹ For example, Gerard addresses Adalbero as follows

⁷⁵ Van Mingroot 1975, p. 281, 282, 303, 308, 323–324; Riches 2007, p. 19–20.

⁷⁶ *Gesta* 1968, p. 393–525.

⁷⁷ *Gesta* 1968, p. 473.

⁷⁸ *Gesta* 1968, p. 477–478.

⁷⁹ *Omni calliditate et fraudulentia criminatus* ('accused of all kinds of perfidies and fraud'); *pro multis criminibus anathematizatum esse* ('anathematized for several crimes'); *fraudulenter* ('deceitfully'); *dampnari* ('to be condemned'); *crimina* ('crimes'); *in arma volare* ('take up arms'); *suum secretarium et suae calliditatis conscium* ('his secretary and partner in crime'); *suas callidates* ('his perfidy'); *culpīs* ('mistakes'); *auditum est anathema* ('an anathema was heard'); *usurpavit* ('usurped'); *rumore* ('rumours'); *stupor* ('stupidity'); *usurpandi sacerdotii* ('usurp your office'); *usurpationis* ('usurpation'); *baratrum patens* ('a gaping abyss'); *fumus*

in a letter: ‘we have not yet put to your attention until today the rumours that circulate about you among the people, but now a certain stupidity has troubled our spirit, I would even say wrecked.’⁸⁰ This way Gerard suggests that there have always been rumours questioning Adalbero’s behavior, but now he finally feels obliged to interfere because Adalbero has crossed the line excessively. The author also insinuates that Adalbero was the initiator of the events: he started the conflict with Harduin by accusing the latter; he falsified letters; he advised Harduin into committing crimes; he ‘deceitfully seduced his co-bishops;’ he elevated his own lay secretary to the archbishopric of Rheims; he obtained agreement of the king for Ebulus’ appointment ‘due to flattery;’ and he tried to sell his episcopal see to an acquaintance of him.⁸¹ It is noteworthy that Adalbero puts forward several accusations against Harduin, but in the end it turns out that the former had advised the latter himself to do what he accused him of. In retrospect, the bishop of Laon has thus established his own guilt. The author motivates Adalbero’s assistance to Ebulus, claiming that he strove to ‘exercise his perfidy more freely’ and that he longed for this ‘since a long time ago.’⁸² It seems therefore that the bishop had carefully planned his deeds, hoping that his own position would benefit from a close friend as archbishop. Ebulus’ motive to become archbishop was not very Catholic either, because he wanted to ‘accumulate a lot of money.’⁸³ The reference to money

temerariae usurpationis (‘the reckless smoke of usurpation’); *scismatis incendium futurum* (‘the future fire of schism’); *discidiis* (‘discord’); *heresiae* (‘heresy’): Gesta 1968, p. 473–474, 477.

⁸⁰ Gesta 1968, p. 477.

⁸¹ *Azelinus Laudunensium episcopus* (‘Bishop Azelinus of Laon’) is the subjective case twice (lines 31 and 44); *falso signatas* (‘false signatures’); *coepiscoporum fraudulentely illectis* (‘deceitfully seduced his co-bishops’); *suis adulationibus* (‘due to his flattery’): Gesta 1968, p. 473–474, 477.

⁸² *Hoc quoque Azelinus multo ante quaesivit et nunc maxime insudabat quatinus per eum suas callidates liberius exerceret* (‘Adalbero, who had been aspiring this since a long time ago, did his very best to obtain this, so he would be able to exercise his perfidy more freely’): Gesta 1968, p. 473.

⁸³ *Spernque suam multa pecunia cumulabat, quam usuris turpiter acervabat* (‘the hope to accumulate a lot of money, that he could heap in an ugly manner with usury’): Gesta 1968, p. 474.

making returns when Gerard accuses Adalbero of trying to sell his see.⁸⁴

Although the name of the author of the *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium* is unknown, it is firmly established that the text was written by a canon of the cathedral church of Cambrai, at the behest of Bishop Gerard of Cambrai.⁸⁵ It is worth mentioning that Adalbero and Gerard were not just co-bishops, but they were also relatives. On the one hand, the author regularly alludes to Gerard of Cambrai as the one who commissioned the production of the chronicle.⁸⁶ On the other hand, both the content and structure demonstrate that the *Gesta* were conceived as propaganda for Gerard's episcopacy, as some sort of pamphlet of his character and his ideology.⁸⁷ In the events in which Adalbero is involved, for instance, Gerard is represented as the honest bishop who faithfully follows and ardently defends canon law. While the other bishops were 'seduced' by Adalbero's trickery, Gerard was the only one who kept his head straight and saw what Adalbero was up to. And when the discussion between Adalbero and Harduin was bound to get out of hand, Gerard interceded and calmed them down, insinuating that his natural authority was obvious.⁸⁸ He also vividly opposed the appointment of Ebulus, which was an 'unworthy action' in Gerard's eyes.⁸⁹ Consequently, there is no discussion about whose opinion the text reflects.

⁸⁴ *Dehinc vero Adalberonem Laudunensium praesulem, qui episcopium, quo fungebatur, Widoni clerico, nepoti videlicet Beroldi episcopi, vendere usurpavit et secum in sede pontificali collocare putabat [...]* ('Next, Lord Adalbero of Laon, who seized the diocese he administered to sell it to the cleric Wido, the nephew of Bishop Beroldus, and who arranged to manage the episcopal see with him [...]): Gesta 1968, p. 477.

⁸⁵ Van Mingroot 1975, p. 313; Gesta 1836, p. 14–17.

⁸⁶ *Precipiente domino nostro episcopo Gerardo* ('complying with (the wishes of) our lord Bishop Gerard'): Gesta 1968, p. 402; *usque ad postremitatem domni Gerardi episcopi, qui nunc est* ('until finally the lord bishop Gerard, who now is'): Gesta 1968, p. 454.

⁸⁷ Byttebier 2012.

⁸⁸ Gesta 1968, p. 473, 477.

⁸⁹ *Ad cuius ordinationem et consecrationem vocatus dominus episcopus, altius reclamavit, et hoc indignum, ut postea probavit eventus* ('the Lord Bishop (Gerard), who was called for the ordination and consecration of the said Ebulus, strongly opposed to this nomination and he persevered vividly against what was, as proved by what follows, an unworthy action'): Gesta 1968, p. 477.

In this context Theo Riches emphasizes that *gesta* are not just narratives, to be read in detail in one sitting, but reference works, written episodically so that future readers could extract the elements that are useful to them without damaging their significance.⁹⁰ If medieval readers have indeed extracted the elements about Adalbero of Laon from the *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*, they will unarguably have seen the unfavourable picture of a devious, greedy, egoistic, simoniacal and power-mad bishop, unworthy of the honourable office he exercised. This raises the question why Gerard would want to paint such an extremely negative picture of Adalbero. Given the character of the criticism it is most likely that Gerard had a problem with his colleague's behaviour. In his letter to Wido of Soissons, for instance, Gerard strongly emphasizes that Adalbero puts the welfare of himself and his allies before the welfare of the church, turning peace into discord and breaking the precious unity of the church.⁹¹ Gerard corroborates his criticism by referring abundantly to Christian tradition such as the Old and the New Testament.⁹² From these

⁹⁰ Refuting the traditional interpretations as a 'Heilsgeschichte' or a one-sided political document: Riches 2007, p. 43.

⁹¹ *Videmur iam intueri quoddam quasi baratrum patens, de quo fumus temerariae usurpationis erumpens, portendit quoddam scismatis incendium futurum, per quod, subeuntibus discidiis, aecclesia a suae pacis unitate solvatur* ('we believe to see a gaping abyss, out of which escapes the reckless smoke of usurpation, and that bears the future fire of a schism, by which the church, agitated by discord, shall see its unity be broken that is its warranty for peace'): Gesta 1968, p. 477.

⁹² *Domnus autem episcopus [...] canonicis ferulis alterutrum pungens* ('the lord Bishop threatened them both with canonical punishments'); *altius reclamavit, et hoc indignum, ut postea probavit eventus, et contra divina eloquia factum iuxta illud apostoli: non neophytum* ('he persevered vividly against what was, as proved by what follows, an unworthy action and against the divine words, according to the words of the apostle: it cannot be a neophyte'); *cum a vobis tam mirandum atque inusitatum nefas in sancta aecclesia esse audimus* ('because we have heard that you have committed terrible and peculiar crimes against the holy church'); *quod quidem nec in omni veteris testamenti canone aut apostolica aecclesia ipsi bene scitis nulli donatum fuisse* ('you know of course well that such a right was not given to anyone, nor according to the prescripts of the old testament, nor of the apostolic church'); *precamur igitur [...] ne quanto divinae ordinationi contraire* ('we pray therefore not to oppose to the divine dispositions'); *quod sane nullius auctoritatis constat pondus habuisse* ('an arrangement that is not supported by a single authority'); *neve scripturam vobis, sed vos scripturam submittatis* ('do not submit the scripture to you, but yourself to the scripture'); *huic adinventioni, quae quidem contra Spiritus sancti ordinationem et totius est aecclesiae catholicae institutionem*

texts he derives rigorous rules that ought to apply to all Church affairs, in contrast with Adalbero's actual, arbitrary behaviour. Moreover, Adalbero is not the only one who is put on the stage for the sake of a wider perspective. For example, Gerard condemns the bishops Beroldus of Soissons and Warinus of Beauvais because they tried to obtain comital rights, but he considers this a violation of the well-defined division between royal and sacerdotal power.⁹³ In other words, Gerard uses (or abuses?) real life stories to elaborate on his own ideas.

To conclude, it is likely that Gerard mentions Adalbero first and foremost as an example of the common bad practices that he opposed to. Rather than purely trying to damage Adalbero's reputation, Gerard uses him to support his own image-building. To re-enforce Gerard's argument, it is only logical that the criticized bishop of Laon is portrayed as badly as possible. This strategy does not imply that we should label all the allegations against Adalbero as false, but at least we have to put them into perspective. Just like Richer contrasted the perfidy of Adalbero with the good intentions of Charles, it seems that Gerard wanted to evoke a negative atmosphere around Adalbero to accentuate the righteousness of his own personal agenda.

4. *Adhemar of Chabannes* – Chronicon

The next chronicle that refers to Bishop Adalbero of Laon is the eleventh-century *Chronicon Aquitanicum et Francicum* ('History of Aquitaine and France').⁹⁴ The author, Adhemar of Chabannes, was a monk in the monasteries of Saint-Martial at Limoges and in the Saint-Cybard at Angoulême, both situated in the region of Aquitaine. As the head of the scriptorium he got on the right side of the local bishops and lords, giving advice and drawing up documents on their behalf. Although he has mastered

('this invention, that is contrary to the rules of holy spirit and to the institutions of the whole catholic church'): Gesta 1968, p. 473, 474, 477.

⁹³ *Hoc etiam modo sanctae aeclesiae statum confundi, quae geminis personis, regali videlicet ac sacerdotali, administrari precipitur* ('but this was in conflict with the state of the holy church, that is prescribed to be administered by two persons, that is a royal and a sacerdotal person'): Gesta 1968, p. 474.

⁹⁴ Adhemar of Chabannes 1999, p. 150, 279.

several other genres, such as poems, sermons and saint's lives, the three-volume *Chronicon* was his masterpiece, which has the history of Aquitaine as its main scope.⁹⁵ The manuscript of this chronicle has seen many changes during the eleventh century, affecting the way in which Adalbero's story has been articulated. The first known manuscript – probably an autograph of Adhemar himself – was written in the period 1025–1028. Comparison to later versions shows that the text is notably shorter, in a more annalistic style of writing. Only the last part of the third book has survived, including the phrases about Adalbero, mentioned below.⁹⁶ The oldest complete manuscript dates from the middle of the eleventh century, which was used in the most recent edition, showing a slightly altered story of Adalbero's betrayal.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Adhemar of Chabannes 1999, vii–x; Landes 1995b, p. 25.

⁹⁶ *Rex autem Lotharius terminans vitam, filium reliquit Ludovicum qui uno tantum anno supervixit, et regnum pro eo accipere voluit Carolus patruus eius pro eo sed non potuit, quia Deus meliorem elegit occulto iudicio. Nam Franci initi consilio eum abiciunt, et Ugonem ducem filium Ugonis regem eligunt. Hac de causa episcopus Montis Leudenensis Ascelinus ebdomada maiora in qua est Caena Domini et Parasceve et Sabbato ante Pascha velut Iudas Christum tradidit, tradidit Carolum. Qua Aurelianis in carcere trusus est usque ad mortem, ibi genuit filios Carolum et Ludovicum, et mortuus est et expulsi sunt filii eius a Francis profectisque sunt ad imperatorem Romanorum et habitaverunt cum eo* ('But when king Lothair ended his life, he left behind a son Louis, who outlived him for only one year, and Charles wanted to receive his father's kingdom for himself, but he did not because God choose a better one with a hidden judgment. Since the Franks, who entered into an assembly, abandoned him and elected as king the duke Hugh, son of Hugh. For this reason bishop Ascelinus of Laon – in the Holy week in which took place the Last Supper and good Friday and the Sabbath before Easter – betrayed Charles, like Judas betrayed Christ. Then he was thrown in a dungeon in Orléans until his death, where his sons Charles and Louis were born, and after his death his sons were expelled and they departed to the Roman emperor and they lived with him'): Adhemar of Chabannes 1999, cx–cxvi; Delisle 1896, p. 332–341; Lair 1901, p. 280–281.

⁹⁷ *Regnum pro eo accipere voluit Carolus patruus ejus pro eo, sed nesquit, quia Deus occulto iudicio meliorem elegit. Nam episcopus Ascelinus Montis Leudenensis urbis, ebdomada ante Pascha post convivium, in lecto quiescentum eum dolo cepit, et consensu plurimorum Ugo dux, filius Ugonis Capetii, in regem elevatus est. At vero Carolus in carcere usque ad mortem retentus est apud Aurelianis, ubi genuit filios Carolum et Ludovicum; et expulsi sunt filii ejus a Francis profectique ad imperatorem Romanorum habitaverunt cum eo* ('Charles wanted to receive the kingdom of his father for himself, but he failed, because God had chosen a better one with a hidden judgment. Because the bishop Ascelinus of the city of Laon – in the week before Easter during a dinner – surprised him in his sleep with a trick and with the approval of several people, duke Hugh, son of Hugh Capet, was elevated to the throne. But Charles was held in a dungeon at Orléans until his death,

In the paragraph about Adalbero in the oldest version, Adhemar relates the same event as Richer. It immediately draws attention that the story is much shorter, stripped down to the bare essentials in three sentences: Adalbero has betrayed Charles, as a result Hugh Capet was elected king and Charles was held captive until his death. Adhemar does not mention the events that had led to the betrayal, neither the previous political incidents or the precise development of the plot itself. However, the author's fastidiousness shows what he considers significant for his own story. At first sight, it seems that the pith of his argument is the transition of the French kingdom from Charles to Hugh, so from the Carolingians to the Capetians. For example, he focuses on the last Carolingian kings Lothair and Louis, and on Charles of Lorraine's own sons Charles and Louis. From this perspective, Adalbero was the vital link that made the transition possible. Also the exact phrasing remains revealing, since Adhemar emphasizes that Adalbero 'betrayed Charles like Judas betrayed Jesus' in the week before Easter, so roughly at the same time as the Last Supper. In other words, Adalbero is explicitly labelled a traitor, and the symbolic comparison to Judas persists as well. However, the author does not portray Adalbero as the sole culprit, since others too had favoured Hugh Capet. For example, Hugh is called *meliozem* ('better'), he was elected king by the Frankish magnates and even God would have preferred him. It also seems that Adalbero betrayed Charles after Hugh was already elected king – in that chronological order – as if to suggest that Adalbero betrayed Charles out of (inevitable?) loyalty to the new Capetian king.

The picture changes radically in the mid-eleventh-century manuscript. The interpolated word *dolo* refers to Adalbero's trickery, insinuating that his actions were carefully planned and not justified. The addition that Adalbero surprised Charles in his sleep underlines the bishop's shamefulness and cowardice. The treason still took place in the week before Easter, but the moment was now specified to a 'dinner', to enforce the resem-

where his two sons Charles and Louis were born; and his sons were expelled from France and departed to the Roman Emperor and they lived with him'): Adhemar of Chabannes 1999, p. 159–189.

blance to Judas at the Last Supper. One interpolation in this manuscript even contradicts Richer's version of the event, seemingly small but with far-reaching consequences. The difference is that Hugh is introduced as a *dux* ('duke') at the moment of the treason and that this duke has become the new king of France only after – so because of – Adalbero's interference. Yet according to Richer and to current common opinion, Hugh was already king since he had been elected by the Frankish magnates and crowned by Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims in 987.⁹⁸ Adalbero of Laon would have broken an oath not to some random nobleman but to the rightful king. Beside the more negative phrasing, the Adalbero passage in the second version is also integrated into a more comprehensive argumentation, enumerating several examples of treacherous actions happening in royal circles. For example, King Lothair would have been poisoned by his adulterous wife, and his successor Louis V met with the same fate.⁹⁹ In other words, the interpolator – whether on purpose or not – exaggerated Adalbero of Laon's treason of Charles and presented it as one of the many treacherous acts in the circles of the French kings.

Then why did Adhemar include the story of Adalbero into his *Chronicon* and why did the interpolator give the story even more depth? After all, the third book of the chronicle discussed the political circumstances in Aquitaine at the turn of the millennium, while Adalbero, Charles and Hugh lived more than 600 kilometres northward, so the story was not intrinsically relevant.¹⁰⁰ A common approach is that Adhemar reflected the widespread opinion that the Capetians had seized power illegitimately. In this context, the passage about Adalbero's treason of Charles – the legitimate Carolingian heir – was probably added to demonstrate that Hugh Capet had stolen the throne. Richard Landes argues for instance that anti-Capetian sentiments were prevalent south of the Loire.¹⁰¹ This has speeded up the ongo-

⁹⁸ Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 218–225.

⁹⁹ *Veneno a regina sua adultera extinctus est* ('killed with poison by his adulterous queen'); *et ipso potu maleficii a sua conjuge Blanca nomine nectus est* ('and he too was murdered with an evil drink by his wife named Blanca'); Adhemar of Chabannes 1999, p. 150.

¹⁰⁰ Landes 1995b, p. 24.

¹⁰¹ Landes 1992, p. 157; Favreau 1997, p. 159–189.

ing process of increasing autonomy of the principalities towards the French kings.¹⁰² However, Landes also proclaims that the Aquitanian dukes initially favoured – or at least tolerated – Hugh Capet.¹⁰³ This would explain the mild approach in the oldest manuscript and the sharper tone of the second version of the *Chronicon*, since at the beginning it was not yet of vital importance to represent the Capetian assumption of power as unlawful. Consequently, we cannot consider the attachment to the Carolingians as the main cause for the incorporation of Adalbero's treason into the chronicle. It seems that instead the implicit message is sent that the Aquitanian rulers – the dukes up front – had every right to abandon their loyalty to the kings up north, since their entourage was morally degenerated. Whereas it is still possible that the adherence to the Carolingian line in aristocratic circles was sincere, it must have been convenient that the dukes could use the treacherous actions as an excuse to pursue an independent line.¹⁰⁴

5. *Historia Francorum Senonensis*

The *Historia Francorum Senonensis* ('The History of the Franks of Sens') is a short history discussing the successive (West-) Frankish kings between 688 and 1015. The author was probably a cleric at the cathedral chapter of Sens, a geographical origin that was also hinted at in the text itself. On the one hand, this work has hardly been used as a source, because positivistic historians have considered it biased. On the other hand, the one article that does study the *Historia* as a whole gets to the bottom of the matter, analysing both the content, the choice of words and the possible motives of the author.¹⁰⁵

The passage about Adalbero of Laon is as brief as in the one in Adhemar's *Chronicon*, only mentioning the essentials. Adalbero himself is referred to as 'the old traitor' and as the 'false

¹⁰² Dunbabin 2000, p. 44–100, 162–222.

¹⁰³ Landes 1995a, p. 24, 217–219; Mundo 1967, p. 13–35; Kienast 1969, p. 529–565; Zimmerman 1981, 345–375; Richard 1903, p. 153–154.

¹⁰⁴ The *Chronicon* contains several examples of the dukes' ambitions to become independent and to obtain a royal crown: Landes 1995b, p. 217–220.

¹⁰⁵ Ehlers 1978, p. 1–26.

bishop of Laon'.¹⁰⁶ To this little veiled terms the author adds that Charles was captured in his sleep, to underline the shameful and cowardly behaviour of the bishop.¹⁰⁷ Again like in the *Chronicon*, Hugh Capet is falsely labelled a duke and Charles a king, clearly instructing the reader on the difference between the usurper and the legitimate king.¹⁰⁸ The author does not mention the oath of fealty explicitly, but he states that Adalbero was a counsellor of Charles.¹⁰⁹ However, the passage also contains two innovations. On the one hand, the author emphasizes that Hugh Capet made the first move: he would have realized that he could not defeat Charles by force of arms, so he took council with the traitor Adalbero.¹¹⁰ Instead of starting the process, the bishop's role was reduced to counselling. On the other hand, Charles would have still been anointed as king, even after he was brought into custody in the city of Orléans.¹¹¹ This means that Charles was not just the rightful heir to the throne, but that his consecration had actually taken place.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ *Traditore vetulo* ('old traitor'); *qui erat episcopus falsus Laudunis* ('who was the false bishop of Laon'): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 368.

¹⁰⁷ *In nocte una quiescentibus [...] vinctus est* ('surrounded one night, while sleeping'): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 368.

¹⁰⁸ *Hugo dux Francorum* ('duke Hugh of the Franks'); *Hugo dux* ('duke Hugh'); *Hugoni duci Francorum* ('duke Hugh of the Franks'); *Hugone duce* ('duke Hugh'); *Hugo dux* ('duke Hugh'); *cui* (= *rex Hludovicus*) *successit Karolus, filius Hlotharii regis* ('Charles, son of king Lothair, succeeded him (king Louis)'); *rex Karolus* ('king Charles'): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 367–368.

¹⁰⁹ *Qui erat [...] consiliarius Karoli* ('who was [...] a counselor of Charles'): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 368.

¹¹⁰ *Cernens itaque Hugo dux quod minime posset Karolum vincere, consilium habuit cum Ascelino traditore vetulo, qui erat episcopus falsus Laudunis et consiliarius Karoli* ('Duke Hugh, having little faith that he could win from Charles, took council with the old traitor Ascelinus, who was the false bishop of Laon and a counselor of Charles'): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 368.

¹¹¹ *Cunctis Hugoni duci Francorum, vinctus est rex Karolus cum uxore sua et ductus in custodia Aurelianis civitate. Nondum autem ipse Karolus erat unctus in regem, resistente Hugone duce* ('king Charles with his wife was defeated by duke Hugh of the Franks and was brought into custody in the city of Orleans. But still, Charles was anointed as king, resisting duke Hugh'): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 368.

¹¹² Hugh Capet was crowned king only after Charles' consecration: *manens vero idem Karolus in custodia Aurelianis in turri, genuit illi uxor sua filios duos Hludovicum et Karolum. Eodem anno unctus est in regem Remis ciuitate Hugo dux* ('however,

As to why the *Historia Francorum Senonensis* was written, several arguments suggest an extreme pro-Carolingian bias. Karl Ferdinand Werner, for instance, acknowledged in the chronicle the ‘legitimizing fiction of the persistent supporters of Charles.’¹¹³ Already the main theme of the text points in that direction, since the author chronologically summarizes and comments upon the reigns of the kings of *Francia*, who belonged almost exclusively to the Carolingian lineage. The adherence to this lineage surfaces for example when a non-Carolingian ascended the throne. When a certain Odo (888–898) was crowned king after the death of Charles the Fat in 888, the author blames the Frankish, Burgundian and Aquitanian magnates.¹¹⁴ The succession of Odo by the Carolingian Charles the Simple (893–922) is phrased as *recepit regnum* (‘he took back the throne’) – as if the royal line was temporary interrupted – and the author underlines his Carolingian blood, stating that the new king was the son of the Louis II the Stammerer (877–879).¹¹⁵ Archbishop Arnulph of Rheims – brother of king Lothair and uncle of Charles – is called a ‘good and modest man,’ ignoring the fact that he had betrayed Hugh Capet as well.¹¹⁶ The passage involving Adalbero corroborates the Carolingian perspective. For example, the author presents Charles as the one who fits the list of legitimate kings, using the same standardized way to introduce him and emphasizing Charles’ blood-ties with previous

Charles remained in custody in a tower in Orleans and he his wife gave birth to two sons Louis and Charles. The same year duke Hugh was anointed to the throne in the city of Rheims’): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 368.

¹¹³ *Die legitimistische Fiktion von der angeblichen Nachfolge Karls*: Werner 1952, p. 209–211; Werner 1965, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ *Deinde Franci, Burgundiones et Aquitanenses proceres congregati in unum, Odonem principem elegerunt sibi in regem* (‘Next, the Frankish, Burgundian and Aquitanian magnates assembled and elected *princeps* Odo as king’): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 365; Ehlers 1978, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ *Obeunte vero Odone rege, recepit regnum Karolus Simplex, filius Hludovici* (‘Succeeding king Odo, Charles the Simple – son of Louis – took back the throne’): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 365.

¹¹⁶ *In diebus illis erat in Remensium civitate archiepiscopus vir bonus et modestus, frater Hlotharii regis ex concubina, nomine Arnulphus* (‘In these days there was in the civitas of Rheims an archbishop, a good and modest man, brother of king Lothair from a concubine, named Arnulph’): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 368; Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 248–256.

kings.¹¹⁷ Hugh Capet and Adalbero of Laon only enter the stage as the disturbers of the rightful royal line. Finally, the last sentence of the paragraph implicitly gives away the author's sentiment: *His deficit regnum Karoli Magni* ('here the reign of Charlemagne ended'). It looks like the author – melancholically casting his mind back to the preceding paragraphs of his narration – regarded these events as the end of a prosperous era.

For all of these reasons, the *Historia* is considered a typical example of the contemporary discussions about the legitimacy of the Capetian rise to power and of the supposed adherence to the Carolingian family. However, Joachim Ehlers argues conclusively that it was not the author's main goal to propagate the Carolingian claim to the throne. Instead, he states that 'the medieval historian sought by the selection, combination, interpretation and presentation of his passages to propagate a view which had originated at the archbishop's court at Sens.' Before they acceded to the throne, the Capetian family cooperated closely with the archbishops of Sens. For example, the Capetian anti-kings in the tenth century were crowned at Sens.¹¹⁸ Yet after 987, Hugh Capet preferred to strengthen the ties with the archbishops of Rheims and to be crowned by them, probably to claim legitimacy by imitating a Carolingian custom. For example, the author hints at the hidden conflict between Sens and Rheims when he situates the crowning of Hugh Capet at Rheims. According to Richer, however, this coronation took place at Noyon, an episcopal see in the archdiocese of Rheims.¹¹⁹ Archbishop Seguinus of Sens is also presented as the sole de-

¹¹⁷ *Cui successit Karolus, frater eius (= Hludovicus rex), filius Hlotharii regis* ('Charles – his (king Louis) brother and son of king Lothair – succeeded him'): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 367.

¹¹⁸ Ehlers 1978, p. 17.

¹¹⁹ *Eodem anno unctus est in regem Remis civitate Hugo dux* ('In the same year duke Hugh was anointed to the throne at the city of Rheims'): *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 368; *dux omnium consensu in regnum promovetur, et per metropolitanum aliosque episcopos Noviomii coronatus, Gallis, Britannis, Dahis, Aquitanis, Gothis, Hispanis, Wasconibus rex Kal. Iun. prerogatur* ('Duke Hugh was elevated to the throne by unanimous consent and on the first of June he was crowned at Noyon by the archbishop and other bishops and established as king over the Gauls, the Bretons, the Normans, the Aquitanians, the Goths, the Spanish and the Gascons'): Richer of Rheims 2011, II, p. 222.

fender of the Carolingian Arnulph – ‘the rightful’ archbishop of Rheims – against the arbitrary interference of Hugh Capet.¹²⁰ It would be only logical that the archbishops of Sens resisted the subsequent decline of their influence, so they fought back with words and portrayed those who were guilty of the decline – their former allies the Capetians – as usurpers. Ehlers concludes therefore that ‘we are not dealing with a historiographical statement of the Carolingian point of view, but with the reaction to a particular situation in ecclesiastical politics.’

6. *Guibert of Nogent – De Vita Sua*

While the previous documents were all composed while Adalbero of Laon was still alive, Abbot Guibert of Nogent wrote the *Monodiarum suarum libri tres* (‘His Autobiography in Three Books’) – also known as the *De Vita Sua* (‘About his Own Life’) – around 1115. The title suggests that the whole work is autobiographical, but in fact this only holds true for the first book. The second book deals with the history of the small abbey of Nogent-sous-Coucy, founded in 1059 and situated in the diocese of Laon. In the third book Guibert discusses a revolt in the city of Laon in 1112.¹²¹ Guibert does not describe the events as a neutral outsider at all; he analyses the previous history and the aftermath, searches for personal motives and judges the behaviour of his contemporaries.¹²²

Unlike the brevity of the *Historia Francorum Senonensis* and Adhemar’s *Chronicon*, Guibert spends a whole paragraph on Adalbero of Laon. He even starts off painting a picture of the bishop that is not completely negative. For example, the author refers to Adalbero’s Lotharingian descent and to his extraordinary wealth. Guibert has probably also seen the bishop’s epitaph in the abbey of Saint-Vincent at Laon, since he states that Adalbero had given land from his personal belongings to the episcopal see of Laon, decorated the church of Laon and ameliorated

¹²⁰ *Historia Francorum Senonensis* 1968, p. 9, 368; Ehlers 1978, p. 13.

¹²¹ Lemmers 1998, p. 11–21; Guibert of Nogent 1981, ix–x; Guibert of Nogent 1996.

¹²² Lemmers 1998, p. 26.

the social circumstances of the clerics.¹²³ Next, however, Guibert contrasts the ‘abundance of benefits’ with Adalbero’s ‘exceptional sins.’¹²⁴ He makes very clear that this one detestable act suffices to damage the bishop’s reputation once and for all, since he rhetorically wonders ‘if there is anything more disgraceful for Adalbero’s memory than the betrayal of his king Charles.’¹²⁵ In the description that follows, Guibert uses the same ingredients as his preceding colleagues to scapegoat Adalbero: negative words;¹²⁶ the broken oath of fidelity;¹²⁷ and the explicit comparison to Judas.¹²⁸ Just like Adhemar and the author of the *Historia Francorum Senonensis*, Guibert claims that Charles was Adalbero’s king at the moment that he broke the oath, to intensify the significance of the treason.¹²⁹ Moreover, Guibert presents the approximately forty-year-old Charles as ‘an innocent boy,’ alluding to the then popular devotion of children martyrs.¹³⁰ The contrast with innocence increases the wickedness of Adalbero’s deeds even further.

It seems Guibert has taken little trouble to conceal his reasons to include the Adalbero passage, because he openly blames

¹²³ *Is, uti compertum nobis est, ex Lotharingia oriundus, dives opum, possessionum locuples, cum distractis omnibus pretia ingentia ad sedem, cui praeerat, transtulisset, ecclesiam suam praecipuis quidem ornatibus insignivit, clero ac pontificio plura auxit* (‘From what we have learned, he originated from Lotharingia, was wealthy and had several possessions, which he all gave to the see over which he presided, he adorned his church with very nice ornaments and he increased the prosperity of the clerics and the bishopric’): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268; epitaph: *Gallia Christiana* 1751a, 522–523.

¹²⁴ *sed cuncta illa beneficia quadam praestantissima iniquitate foedavit* (‘but all of these benefits, he ruined with his exceptional sins’): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268.

¹²⁵ *Quid enim nequius, quid sibi ignominiosius, quam quod dominum suum prodidit* (‘If there is anything more disgraceful for Adalbero’s memory than the betrayal of his King Charles’): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268.

¹²⁶ *Iniquitate* (‘sins’); *prodidit* (‘betrayed’); *ignominiosius* (‘disgraceful’), *facinus* (‘crime’): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268.

¹²⁷ *Dominum suum, cui sacramentum fidelitatis ille praebuerat* (‘his lord, to whom he had sworn an oath of fidelity’): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268.

¹²⁸ *Instar Judae patravit* (‘he betrayed him like Judas’): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268.

¹²⁹ *Dominum suum regem* (‘his lord the king’): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268.

¹³⁰ *Innocentem puerum* (‘innocent boy’): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268; Carozzi 1976, p. 468; Delaruelle 1964, p. 108–109.

the bishop for having turned himself against the descendants of Charlemagne.¹³¹ The reference to the famous Charlemagne is most likely no coincidence, since it suggests that the Carolingian lineage had been occupying the throne ever since his reign. A few lines further down, the author mentions 'the destruction of those who should reign and those who reign,' again a suggestion that the Carolingians were the legitimate royal heirs.¹³² The author's underlying motive, however, was probably less royalist. The first sentence of the third book runs as follows: 'before I represent the tragedies of the people of Laon, I have to go back to the origins of this madness, that is the decay of their bishops. This has started a long time ago, but I think we have to begin our story with Ascelinus.'¹³³ It looks like Guibert wanted to explain the problems in his own time, so he searched for precedents in the history of the diocese and its bishops. Besides Adalbero, for instance, the author also rants about bishops Helilandus (1052–1095) and Enguerrand (1100–1104).¹³⁴ The Bishops Gebuinus (1035–1050) and Leotheric (1050–1052) were ignored, maybe because Guibert had found nothing to accuse them of.

Even among these despicable individuals Guibert takes the poorest view of Adalbero, since the author considers the bishop's actions the germ of the twelfth-century problems in Laon. God did not punish the city of Laon immediately – on the contrary, Adalbero's treason was followed by a time of prosperity –

¹³¹ *Et in extremum genus Magni Caroli cursum genealogiae transfudit* ('and to have turned to another family the course of the descendants of Charlemagne'): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268.

¹³² *In qua subversione regnatorum atque regnantis, ipse certe non providit utilem ad tempus mutationem, sed pravae suae penes innocuos voluntatis expletionem* ('in the overturn of those who should reign and those who reign, he certainly did not aim for a useful, temporary transition, but for the fulfilment of his own, wicked will at the expense of the innocent'): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268.

¹³³ *De Laudunensibus, ut spoondimus, jam modo tractaturi, imo Laudunensium tragoedias acturi, primum est dicere totius mali originem ex pontificum, ut nobis videtur, perversitatibus emersisse, qui cum diuturnior longe exstiterit ab Ascelio, huic operi attexenda putatur* ('Before I represent the tragedies of the people of Laon, I have to go back to the origins of this madness, that is the decay of their bishops. This has started a long time ago, but I think we have to begin our story with Ascelinus'): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 268.

¹³⁴ Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 270–273.

but Guibert emphasizes that this was only a temporary reprieve.¹³⁵ According to Trudy Lemmers, Guibert regards the bishop of Laon's act as some sort of 'original sin,' fundamentally disturbing the God-given order of the universe.¹³⁶ In other words, it was Adalbero who called down misfortune upon the city and the diocese of Laon, culminating in the riots of 1112. The exemplary function of Adalbero's treason becomes even more clear when Guibert returns to the subject in a later paragraph: bishop Gaudry of Laon (1106–1112) has bribed the king to violate an oath of fealty on the day of the Last Supper, 'on the same day that his predecessor Ascelinus had betrayed his king, as aforesaid.'¹³⁷ The decay of Laon – predestined by God as punishment for Adalbero's behavior – had now fully come to the surface. It is therefore safe to conclude that Guibert includes the passage about Adalbero of Laon as proof of his own explanation for the present events.

7. Conclusion

It is interesting to see that the influence of medieval authors to shape someone's authority also worked the other way around. On the one hand, the goal of this study is not to claim that all the negative stories about Adalbero of Laon were made up and that the bishop actually should have been canonized. In fact, it is likely that Richer's *Historiae* and the *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium* accurately describe the events, or that they at least demonstrate that rumours about the bishop's behaviour frequently circulated. On the other hand, it is firmly established that the medieval writers were biased, although plenty of contemporary sources demonstrate that the bishop had other, more regular occupations as well. The amount of words spent on Adalbero varies, but it seems that all of them applied the same strategies to scapegoat the bishop. First of all, the authors have exclusively

¹³⁵ *Deo poenam differente* ('God postponed the punishment'): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 269.

¹³⁶ Lemmers 1998, p. 43.

¹³⁷ *Quo videlicet die Ascelinus episcopatus, praedecessor ejus, regem suum ut praedixi prodiderat* ('On the same day his predecessor bishop Ascelinus had betrayed his king, as aforesaid'): Guibert of Nogent 1981, p. 331.

selected events in which Adalbero played a dubious role. If the narrated actions weren't always contrary to (canon) law, at least they were emphatically represented as discreditable and morally wrong. Guibert of Nogent – the sole author to mention something favourable – applies the positive parts only to contrast them with the precariousness of the bishop's treason. Also the choice of words directs the reader to a particular interpretation, painting a negative picture of Adalbero by referring to such things as treason, crimes, infidelity, conspiracies, selfishness or cowardice. In each case Adalbero is represented as the main actor, as the initiator of a carefully devised strategy. This way, the authors leave no doubt about who is to blame for whatever went wrong after the related incidents. The scandalous character of Adalbero's actions is furthermore strengthened by symbolism, such as the emphasis on the principle of oath swearing and its decisive role in structuring tenth-century relations; or the punctual resemblance in time, place and progress to Judas' betrayal of Jesus Christ, the archetype of all treasons.

In addition to the literary strategy, the chronicles have in common that the authors hid their reasons to include and demonize Adalbero. They say one thing, but they mean another. For example, Richer of Rheims covered up his political preferences by giving Adalbero's broken oath to Charles disproportionate attention, implicitly criticising the legitimacy of the Capetian rise to power. At first sight, it seems the adherence to the Carolingians also moved the other chroniclers to report the Adalbero story. While Richer may have secretly thought that Charles was the legitimate king, Adhemar of Chabannes, Guibert of Nogent and the author of the *Historia Francorum Senonensis* actually said it aloud by presenting Hugh Capet as duke and Charles of Lorraine as king at the moment that Adalbero had committed himself to Charles. The analogy in the sources could be interpreted as if the claimed loyalty towards the Carolingians was sincere, widespread and persistent long after 987. This interpretation, however, ignores the context and the specific intention of the individual authors. In each case, Adalbero's actions were the perfect example to serve a particular goal of the author. Gerard of Cambrai wanted to set forth his views on how a good bishop should hold his office, so he used Adalbero as an example

of the common bad practices that he opposed to. The successive versions of Adhemar of Chabannes' *Chronicon* increasingly dramatized the bishop's treason, corresponding to the growing pursuit of independence of the dukes of Aquitaine in the eleventh century. Guibert of Nogent tried to account for the troubles in twelfth-century Laon and he found a convincing argument in the wickedness of its bishop some hundred years earlier. The author of the *Historia Francorum Senonensis* suggested the primacy of the archbishopric of Sens over the archbishopric of Rheims, so he illustrated the moral degeneration in the latter church province with examples of dubious bishops.

Of course, it is impossible to refute conclusively that the affinity with the Carolingian lineage – and consequently the aversion towards Adalbero – was invented or exaggerated, since we cannot read the minds of the authors, let alone those of their contemporaries. Nonetheless, it seems more plausible that the Carolingian sympathies were first and foremost an excuse, since every single author had a valid, underlying motive to mention the story of Adalbero, Charles and Hugh, and to accentuate the bishop's unreliability. Moreover, the events in question were taken completely out of context at every turn, having no direct links with the other parts of the chronicles. In other words, the references to Adalbero can be regarded as exemplary additions, as mere instruments of a more comprehensive argumentation. Consequently, it seems the label of bishop Adalbero as a 'traitor' has only become a theme in medieval writing involuntarily. First, Richer had painted a negative picture of the bishop of Laon for personal reasons; next, the other authors independently adopted this picture because it perfectly fitted their own discourse. There was no elaborated strategy, no carefully orchestrated plot to slander Adalbero's reputation, it was more a matter of bad timing. This leads to the conclusion that authority is not carved in stone, as if it were an intrinsic characteristic of an individual, predestined to blossom one day or another. Instead, authority – even if an individual theoretically fits the model – still needs to be actively attributed by others. Although Adalbero of Laon can certainly be considered 'authority-worthy', the personal agendas of medieval chroniclers decided otherwise.

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Abstract

Historians, sociologists and anthropologists generally study how authority was shaped, considering authority to be the logical outcome of someone's behaviour and actions. However, one only becomes an 'authority' when other people attribute this characteristic to him or her. To stress the decisive influence of contemporaries, this article focuses on an individual who had the potential to become an authority, but failed to be remembered as such: Bishop Adalbero of Laon (977–1033). More specifically, the author analyses five chronicles to unravel the various strategies and motives of medieval authors to scapegoat the bishop: The *Historiae* of Richer of Reims; the *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*; the *Chronicon* of Adhemar of Chabannes; the *Historia Francorum Senonensis*; and the *De Vita Sua* of Guibert of Nogent. This way, an aspect of episcopal authority in the tenth and early eleventh century that has been for the most part ignored by all major studies, is explored, namely an individual bishop's subsequent reputation. It shows how these posthumous evaluations have deeply impacted current assessments of individuals.

JOHN VAN ENGEN

AUTHORSHIP, AUTHORITY,
AND AUTHORIZATION:
THE CASES OF ABBOT BERNARD
OF CLAIRVAUX AND ABBESS
HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

Bernard of Clairvaux (c. 1090–1153) and Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) enjoyed enormous fame across Europe during the twelfth century, he as the most influential churchman in its second quarter, she as the most talked-of churchwoman in its third. Their fame rested first of all on larger-than-life *personae* made manifest in oral performance, he as a preacher and she as a seer. The rhetorical power of those *personae* reached beyond local audiences however through writing, for him signally in sermons, for her in visionary oracles. Their authority thus became inextricably interwoven with authorship. In the twelfth century the spoken and the written word intersected quite especially in the letter, the preferred form projecting the spoken word in writing. Both figures understood this very well. From Bernard we have some 550 surviving letters, from Hildegard some 400. Both figures too proved exceptionally self-conscious authors, and perhaps especially in their letter-writing. Here we step back to consider how a preacher and a seer positioned themselves rhetorically to appear as ‘authorized’ and equally to act as ‘authors.’ We will focus mainly on their own words. We pause first, however, to register the impressions of one contemporary observer, a man who encountered Bernard at a crucial historical moment and personally heard in high places the buzz surrounding Hildegard.

John the Little as he was originally called, then more commonly John of Salisbury, emerged from twelve years of schooling in Paris a sharp observer and gifted writer. Aged about thirty, he found work initially clerking for his friend Peter, recently (1145) elected abbot of Montier-la-Celle (Troyes). At Paris John

had studied with several of the great masters of his day, including Peter Abelard (later 1130s) and Gilbert of Poitiers (1141), though he was ultimately most taken with the ‘grammarian’ (literary expositor) William of Conches.¹ In March 1148, presumably in the company of Abbot Peter, he attended a council at Reims convoked by Pope Eugene III, likely the most portentous such event he had as yet witnessed in person. It also proved a turning-point in his career. He would subsequently secure work as a clerk in the chancery of Pope Eugene (c. 1149–1152), then that of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury (c. 1153–1161), and finally Archbishop Thomas Becket. Fifteen years or so after that council at Reims John undertook a ‘history’ centered (at least in its extant form) on the years he had served in Eugene’s papal chancery. Addressed to Abbot Peter, it was stocked with stunning literary portraits and vignettes, and turned initially on the contestation between Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux and Master/Bishop Gilbert of Poitiers.²

Bernard was then, John noted, at the height of his influence (*summa auctoritas*). At least as John saw it, his opinion or counsel (*consilium*) moved ecclesiastical and political affairs beyond any other.³ On the occasion of the council, convoked for other purposes, and in continuance of a bitter dispute begun in Paris, Bernard aggressively attacked certain teachings ascribed to Gilbert. Other budding theologians (Peter Lombard, Robert of Melun, and a Master Arnold nicknamed ‘Un-smiling’) joined Bernard – whether, John ironically observed, out of zeal for the faith, envy of the Master’s fame and merit, or to gain favor with the Abbot. John recounts here an intriguing story of the Abbot gath-

¹ See Weijers 1984.

² John of Salisbury, *Historia Pontificalis*, ed. Chibnall. The council, quite especially the confrontation between Abbot Bernard and Master Gilbert, takes up more than forty percent of the extant text (p. 4–41). John’s long exposition of Gilbert’s doctrinal position was written explicitly to make it intelligible to his friend and patron, Abbot Peter, whose instincts probably lay with Bernard (XV, ed. Chibnall, p. 41) ‘...tum ut tue satisfacerem uoluntati, edisserens intelligentiam quam prefatus episcopus [Gilbert] in supra positis credebatur habere capitulis.’ On that contestation, which has generated a large literature, see still Miethke 1975.

³ ‘...cuius tunc summa erat auctoritas, cuius consilio tam sacerdocium quam regnum pre ceteris agebatur.’ John, *Historia Pontificalis*, ed. Chibnall VIII, p. 16.

ering key prelates in his residence for a kind of pre-meeting, a cabal to get people on his side prior to the planned hearing, a move Bernard had made on other occasions. In the end Bernard was not successful, and he then commissioned young John – known to him probably as a promising clerk in the company of his friend Abbot Peter – to seek out Bishop Gilbert (with whom John had studied) and request that the two principles meet in a neutral religious house elsewhere to confer on a crucial point in the Master's defense; Gilbert refused, saying he had presented his case.⁴ Even then John the Little must have been perceived as diplomatically dexterous. Of importance for us is his sketch of Bernard's perceived authority.

He introduced the Abbot of Clairvaux as 'most holy and of commanding authority' (*uir sanctissimus et precepte auctoritatis*).⁵ This last attribute – rendered by Marjorie Chibnall as 'of weighty influence' – presents a nice puzzle. If we hear *precepte* as echoing *praeceps*, it bears the force of 'impulsive' as well as 'headmost'; if drawn from *praeceptum*, then as 'commanding'; and if meant also to recall *praeceptor*, as 'teaching.' John perceived Abbot Bernard, and implied most contemporaries did as well, as a 'very holy man' but no less as 'forceful' and 'prescriptive' and 'teaching'. At the 'cabal' (which John likely witnessed in the company of Abbot Peter) he casts Bernard as the most religious man (*religiosissimus*) in the room but likewise as the most rhetorically capable (*dissertissimus*), gaining his way with elegant and pithy talk (*elegantem et compendiosum sermonem*).⁶ Setting the contrast between the two, John (who plainly leaned to his teacher Gilbert) presented the Abbot as a man of highest repute and most eloquent (*clarissime opinionis et eloquentissimo uiro*), but his former Master as the most learned man of his era (*etate nostra litteratissimus*), the very keenest of intellect (*uir ingenii perspicacissimi*), widely read, so deeply learned in the liberal arts as to stand above any other in the age (by implication quite especially Bernard).⁷

⁴ 'Memini me ipsum ex parte abbatis episcopum sollicitasse quatinus conuenirent in aliquo religioso loco...ut amice et sine contentio conferret super dictis beati Hylarii'. John, *Historia* XII, ed. Chibnall p. 26.

⁵ *Ibidem* VII, p. 14.

⁶ *Ibidem* VIII, p. 17.

⁷ *Ibidem* VIII, p. 15; VIII, p. 16.

When the charges were forestalled, partly by sympathetic cardinals, the Abbot, frustrated and outraged, marched directly to the quarters of the pope, Eugene being his former monastic charge at Clairvaux, and stormed into his presence as if he were a member of the household (*familiariter*).⁸ John observed more broadly of Bernard's authority, in ironic scriptural wordplay, that he was powerful (*potens*) in word and deed (see Acts 7:22), a reality, he says, true 'before God as it was believed (*ut creditur*), and before humans as was publically known (*ut publice notum est*).'⁹

John portrayed both abbot and master as extraordinarily learned and eloquent, but perceived in them different modes of learning and thus of authorship and authority, Bernard's in Holy Writings, Gilbert's in the liberal arts. He recognized in Bernard as preacher ('none better since Gregory the Great') a singular ability to expound Holy Writings in a highly polished style, indeed to make their language entirely his own, while in Gilbert he perceived a learning that rested upon an unparalleled comprehension of the church fathers ('holy doctors').¹⁰ Of Gilbert's performance at the public hearing John said that the cardinals and other prelates had read nothing he had not also read and no man ever spoke as he had¹¹ – his authority resting however more upon comprehensive learning than eloquence or oneness with the language of Scripture. For each, we should note, the learning came to authoritative expression first of all orally and in Latin, as preacher and teacher. John saw this as springing from their respective '*studiis*.' We should be wary of turning to the modern cognate, as Chibnall did ('branches of learning'), though that meaning was implicitly at work as well. The word meant first of all 'effort' or 'enterprise' or 'zeal.' Bernard's zeal or enterprise was primarily that of a 'preacher' (*praedicator*) – in the broad medieval usage of that word (proclaimer, instructor,

⁸ *Ibidem* IX, p. 20. Chibnall translated it 'as a friend,' true enough. But the point is that he entered the papal entourage as if he were part of the *familia*, the inner circle or entourage.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Ibidem* XII, p. 26–27.

¹¹ 'Non memini tamen quempiam gloriatum ibi se legisse quod ille non legerat. Tandem a curia digressi sunt cardinalibus plerisque aliis dicentibus de episcopo quod nunquam sic locutus est homo' (see John 7:46, of Christ!). *Ibidem* X, p. 21.

guide, as well as preacher of Holy Writings) – while Gilbert’s was primarily that of a ‘teacher’ (*doctrina*), particularly of the liberal arts and the writings of the church fathers, and especially for more advanced students. Many at that time, John observed, tried to imitate them in their respective ‘enterprises’ but none could keep up with them.¹² Now, those enterprises were oral in origin and first expression, and only subsequently might gain influence and audience in written form – a point which the preacher Bernard seems to have grasped more fully and quickly than did the teacher Gilbert.

In his ‘*Historia*’ John observed to Abbot Peter, very strikingly, that, while both were quick of mind and devoted to investigating Scripture, the abbot was decidedly ‘more energetic and effective in getting business done’ (*negociis expediendis exercitior et efficiatior*).¹³ In ecclesiastical circles and canon law *negotia* (business, affairs) encompassed the run of political, ecclesiastical, and other activities. Abbot Bernard was perceived, quite simply, as a highly effective actor on the public stage, and that power on the public stage derived ultimately, John opined a bit bemusedly, from his facility in speech: Given an opportunity to speak (*dicendi facultate*) Abbot Bernard could nearly always persuade people of what he wanted.¹⁴ Bernard knew himself that he was so perceived, as he amusingly noted in a letter written to Pope Eugene near the time of this council. Launching off in brash form (a rhetorical faux-pas in letter-writing as he well knew), he dared to ‘importune’ the pope himself, once his monastic son, now his apostolic father, he says, because the fault here was Eugene’s: people say that you are not pope but me (*Aiunt non uos esse papam sed me*), and so from all around any who have business (*negotia*) come flooding to me!¹⁵ Here the exchange among familiars, though by letter, retains its oral tone.

¹² ‘Erant tamen ambo optime literati et admodum eloquentes, sed dissimilibus studiis. Abbas enim, quod ex operibus patet, predicator erat egregius ... Doctrina eius [Gilbert’s] nouis obscurior sed prouectis compendiosior et solidior uidebatur. ... Utrumque in suis studiis multi conati sunt imitari, sed nec unus, quod meminerim, alterutrum assecutus est.’ *Ibidem* XII, p. 27.

¹³ *Ibidem* XII, p. 27.

¹⁴ *Ibidem* IX, XII, VII, IX: p. 20, 26–27, 14–15, 21.

¹⁵ Bernard, *Epistola* 239, in *Opera*, ed. Leclercq, 8, p. 120.

The authority surrounding Bernard of Clairvaux, actual or rhetorical, has not received particularly satisfying treatment from scholars. Those focused on Bernard as monk and his spirituality tend to all but suppress any hard look at his power and its relentless, sometimes ruthless, deployment, while those who see and focus upon it frequently reduce him to the caricature of a clerical tyrant. In the perceptions of people of his own era it was more complex, evidenced by John's ironic wonder at and real respect for Abbot Bernard despite leaning to his teacher, also by the cardinals' resistance to Bernard's pursuit of Gilbert. John the Little saw Bernard as a person about whom people felt variously (*varia opinio*), especially owing to his treatment of Abelard, perhaps reflecting his own closeness to Parisian school circles. In writing for his friend and patron Abbot Peter (who was closer to Bernard) he employed an awkward negative construction: for himself he could not be persuaded that a man of 'such holiness' would not possess God's own zeal¹⁶ – this tongue-twister betraying ambiguities many felt.

Near the time John was penning his *Historia Pontificalis*, a clerk now to Becket but exiled in France and resident mostly again with Abbot Peter, he wrote to a friend, Master Gerard Pucelle, a fellow cleric in the Becket circle. In October 1166 Gerard had been dispatched to Cologne owing to the papal schism that followed upon disputes between Pope Alexander III and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. This letter aimed mostly to offer friendship and assurance amidst troubled times. Towards its end, in a further point (*De cetero*), he asked Gerard to poke around in book cupboards for any texts of interest. At the very least, he noted, in German lands he should have access to Hildegard of Bingen's *visiones et oracula*: See whether she has anything to say there about the end of this schism.¹⁷ John characterized her as *beata* and

¹⁶ 'De ipso tamen uaria opinio est, aliis sic et aliis sic sentientibus de eo.... Set mihi persuaderi non potest quod homo tante sanctitatis non habuerit zelum Dei.' John, *Historia* VIII, ed. Chibnall, p. 16. John the Little himself, we might note, managed to come away from all this with that most valuable of commodities for a rising student-cleric, a position in Pope Eugene's chancery and a letter of recommendation from the Abbot of Clairvaux. See Bernard, *Epistola* 361, ed. Leclercq, 7, p. 307–308, with the historical commentary of F. Gasteldelli, in *Werke*, 3, p. 1182–1183.

¹⁷ John of Salisbury, *Epistola* 185, ed. Millor & Brooke, 2, p. 222–225.

highly renowned (*celeberrima*). Resident now at the Rupertsberg on the Rhine across from Bingen, Hildegard was still very much alive and at the height of her acclaim. In John's mind the abbess deserved attention and respect as a visionary, as someone indeed 'recommended and venerable,' owing to Pope Eugene's special affection for her (a point to which we will return).¹⁸ All things German and imperial were for John mostly distant and distasteful. But by way of Pope Eugene, presumably going back to service in his curia during the years 1148/1152, he had learned of Hildegard, or in his own words, of the pope's 'affectionate embrace of her.' He offered no pen portrait, never having had a personal encounter with her. But his letter mirrored contemporary perceptions in high places.¹⁹

So in an age when news traveled by foot, horse and hearsay, how did such figures gain stature, become famed, or acquire authority? Both Hildegard and Bernard sprang from the gentry class, she one or two ranks higher than he, and both relied initially quite heavily on well-connected local families. Both attained fame most fundamentally as holy people, albeit with quite distinctive forms of holiness, his very ascetic, hers not at all, his made manifest in preaching, hers in visions. Both presided over great cloistered communities, these providing not only an institutional foundation and a secure home base but a public platform as well. Bernard's status also grew along with his leadership in the Cistercian order, and Hildegard's did upon gaining independence at the Rupertsberg and accessibility on the Rhine.²⁰ The authority that sprang from their perceived holiness and from their roles as preacher or seer surpassed in various dimensions that sprung from their formal status as *abbas* and *magistra*, though the latter offices remained crucial and were always presumed.

¹⁸ He also explicitly noted here, or recalled, a prophecy by her made during Eugene's papacy. '...quae [Hildegard] michi ex eo commendata est et uenerabilis quod eam dominus Eugenius speciali caritatis affectu familiarius amplectebatur. Explore etiam diligentius, et rescribite an ei sit de fine huius scismatis aliquid revelatum. Praedixit enim in diebus beati Eugenii quod non esset nisi in extremis diebus pacem et gratiam in urbe habiturus.' *Ibidem* p. 224.

¹⁹ See Van Engen 2000.

²⁰ See Haverkamp 2000.

Historians continue to debate the nature of power in the twelfth century, whether it inhered in persons or offices, thus, in the brilliant person of Abelard or his status as master, in the charismatic person of Gregory VII or his status as vicar of St. Peter, in the dynastic person of Frederick Barbarossa or his office as king and future emperor. Both, we might say, and in all differing combinations, that personal charisma proving absolutely indispensable even as more impersonal notions of office were gaining in validity across the century.²¹ In one of her earlier extant letters Hildegard took the initiative to greet and exhort Frederick Barbarossa not long after his election as king in 1152. People have need, she says, for this agreeable (*dulcem*) *personam* which you, as king, now are, '*persona*' in this case manifestly referring ambivalently to both his office and his person. As the holder of a glorious title (*nomen*) he must discern and do his duty (*officium*), lest he stand accused before the supreme King. He must accordingly look out carefully before him (*sollicite provide*), and make provisions with respect to the dark clouds of sin overshadowing every part of the land, all those deceitful mobs.²² To attain recognition and influence, any kind of public authority, personal charisma and the powers of office had to co-inhere, thus the seer and the independent abbess, the preacher and the abbot.

But then more precisely, in what sense might their writings attain 'authorization'? Twelfth-century Europe witnessed a veritable explosion of writing, a true laboratory of fertile experiments.²³ For these works, however, all written out by hand and on parchment, few or no recognized paths existed for distribution or approval, for authorizing one as an author. Indeed the default stance, if overstated then and now, was more likely suspicion toward any who imagined they could multiply writings beyond those of the ancient *auctores* or church fathers. Trained clerics were to teach and indeed imitate these authorities, this

²¹ See Kantorowicz 1957 and Benson 1968.

²² Hildegard, *Epist.* 312, ed. Van Acker & Klaes-Hochmüller, 3, p. 72–73. The generally admirable English translation by Baird & Ehrmann, *Letters* 3, p. 112, does not fully do justice to the complexities of the medieval vocabulary for person and office.

²³ A matter often taken for granted, or approached indirectly, but see now for instance Sharpe 2009 concerning Anselm of Bec.

the very heart of instruction, but not ordinarily strive or pretend to go beyond them, or at least so people would say. Such charges were leveled against three quite different new authors in the 1110s: Rupert of Deutz (or, Robert of St. Laurent), a monk in Liège; Peter Abelard, a student and teacher mostly around Paris; and a bit later the unknown author of the *Libellus de diversis ordinibus*, likely a canon regular, perhaps in Arras or southern Flanders, quite possibly Liège.²⁴ Still more to our point, a statute issued by the emerging Cistercian General Chapter sometime in the 1130s or 1140s, and registered likely at Clairvaux, ruled that monks were not to ‘compose new works’ (*Si liceat alicui novos libros dictare*) apart from the Chapter’s permission.²⁵ Writers as well as reformers in this era came in disproportionate numbers from the ranks of former teachers, thus a Peter Damian and an Anselm of Bec; but teachers, we must remember, like preachers, worked first of all and predominantly in an oral medium. Bernard’s signature works, apart from his letters and letter-tractates, were sermons. Neither Bernard nor Hildegard were teachers as such, even if their public profile could be very instructive and admonitory, and as head of the Rupertsberg, her own foundation, she assumed the title *magistra*.

This era of noisy reform generated new texts nonetheless, many of them, their disputes often cast as ‘letters.’²⁶ By way of such a written missive a ‘person’ could enter the presence of a king or pope, a bishop or adversary, and make his petition, offer advice, exchange views, denounce falsity, argue a case.²⁷ Such writing had to perform its own etiquette of presentation,

²⁴ The cases of Rupert and Abelard are well known and much discussed. This unknown author wrote quite originally on the varied religious communities of his age, and plainly feared or sensed a similar response: ‘Sed dicit aliquis: Quid audes dicere, quod ante te nullus ausus est asserere? ... Ad quod respondeo me non alicui melius sapienti et intelligenti preiudicare, sed meliora dicentem paratum audire. Sed qui optima dicere ob ingenii mei tenuitatem fortasse nescio, ideo semper tacebo?’ *Libellus de Diversis Ordinibus*, ed. Constable & Smith, p. 12–14.

²⁵ Waddell 2002, p. 553.

²⁶ For a cultural approach emphasizing a broad notion of ‘*disputatio*,’ see now Novikoff 2013.

²⁷ This is a much-studied part of twelfth-century culture, on which there is now an extensive literature; see Van Engen 1997, and more recently Constable 2012.

the *captatio benevolentiae*. More, to achieve a measure of validation or authorization those written words sounded aloud before others had to bear whatever office this person inhabited, whatever higher grace they claimed, whatever moral or political or religious weight. This cultural and literary performance was well understood by Bernard and Hildegard, who both employed letters prolifically to project their voice across Europe in writing and to address persons of all ranks. Already in their lifetimes these letters were gathered into collections which themselves represented works of religious teaching as well as literary display that thus came too with an unmistakable note of self-authorizing.

This writing required learning. Much about the early educations of both Bernard and Hildegard remains unclear, his in a canonical school at Châtillon-sur-Seine, hers at the monastery of Disibodenberg under Volmar. Both came to manifest an extraordinary self-consciousness about language, and their Latin prose would emerge as an integral and distinctive part of their appeal: Hildegard's born in part of thinking in German while composing awkwardly and yet poetically in Latin, Bernard's of a mellifluous ear for all the rhetorical powers of the Latin language (though 'early drafts' mirror his vernacular Romance base). Trusting readers accepted Hildegard's unusual language as coming from the 'Living Light,' while no less than the school-trained John of Salisbury opined that Bernard's 'sweet' sermons, especially those on the Song of Songs, were dictated by the Holy Spirit.²⁸ Critics on the other hand resented Bernard's prose as rhetorically manipulative, while Archbishop Arnold of Mainz (1158/60) scoffed of Hildegard that if God could make prophets of peasants and could cause an ass to speak, his Spirit might blow through her too.²⁹ Here the focus is not so much on the teach-

²⁸ '...et in illa subtilissima et utilissima expositione Canticorum quam procul dubio per os eius dictavit Spiritus sanctus...' But in this very same sentence he writes that Bernard subsequently wrote much to the '*suggillatio*' (the 'bruising' or 'insulting') of Gilbert; then adds that the 'most holy abbot' was not thought to have written except out of charity and zeal for the faith (*sed non creditur scripsisse aliquid quod non fidei zelus et caritatis feruor expresse*it). John, *Historia* XI, ed. Chibnall p. 25. His language more than hints at irony – John always walking a narrow line of respect and reserve when he treats of Bernard.

²⁹ Hildegard of Bingen, *Epistolarium* 20, ed. Van Acker, 1, p. 56.

ings as such³⁰ but on the language and means Bernard and Hildegard employed to signal their authority as writers, each in effect creating narratives of authorization.

We begin with the single existing exchange between Hildegard and Bernard. It is datable to 1147/1148, and it turns entirely on authorship and authorization. Bernard was then about 57 years old, abbot already for thirty-five years and entering upon the last phase of his public life. Hildegard, just reaching her fiftieth year, and leader for roughly ten years of a women's community attached to Disibodenberg, was just about to launch upon a more public and independent life. At Disibodenberg she had already composed some of the lyrics and music that would become her *Symphoniae* and written parts of the visionary work she would entitle *Scivias*. In January or March 1147 Bernard traveled through her region to preach what we call the Second Crusade. She initiated contact with him. This she did by way of a letter overtly asking for counsel and in effect seeking endorsement, and almost certainly sending along samples of her emerging work. Her act must have enjoyed support, at the very least, from her teacher and aid, the priest Volmar, possibly her abbot too. The original letter was likely sealed since she wrote it as a private consultation.

Hildegard addressed Abbot Bernard as a wondrously honored personage set apart by the power of God (*mirabiliter in magnis honoribus virtutis dei*). By contrast she presented herself as reaching out to his wisdom (*sapientia*), to this astonishing force which the 'stupid' of this world feared, she a wavering (*mobilis*) soul turned in the beam of a winepress, he standing firm, a victor in his soul, raising the whole world to salvation. Hildegard's letter,³¹ the earliest extant as far as we know, presents a figure at once vulnerable and assertive. She pens the earliest extant telling of her story, that experience of visions since childhood and of writing despite being unlearned – he, she says, the only person

³⁰ For Hildegard's use of *auctoritates* in her writings, another approach to this issue, see Deploige 1998.

³¹ Hildegard, *Epistola* 1, ed. Van Acker, 1, p. 3–6. I first dealt with some of these issues in Van Engen 2000, p. 379–392, and here approach them from a different angle.

to whom she has revealed this except one sympathetic *pater* (Volmar). Then invoking Father, Son and Holy Spirit she calls upon Abbot Bernard to speak to her visions and her writing, to help her overcome inner doubts, and especially to silence doubters, those ‘stupid’ ones skeptical of her and so disheartening to her.

The letter comes to us preserved in the very earliest layer of her correspondence’s transmission, its hand identified as from Disibodenberg, whether copied there or by a monk of Disibodenberg working later at the Rupertsberg (c. 1152–1153).³² This same letter was then later redacted, ‘improved upon,’ probably by Volmar in the later 1160s or again by Guibert of Gembloux in the later 1170s. It entered the final collection of her correspondence in this redacted form³³ – and still overshadows many accounts of Hildegard. The ‘Hildegard’ she had presented to Abbot Bernard got transformed here into that more confident and assertive ‘Hildegardian’ figure familiar in her later writings and promoted by her redactors. This edited version removes all traces of a subservient Hildegard, of a woman less than confident in her calling. Her admission to Bernard ‘whence I speak as one in doubt (*dubitando*)’ becomes ‘I speak to you having no doubt about you.’ Her ‘I ask you through the living God that you hear me asking you’ disappears altogether. And her call on him to ‘answer (*responde*) me’ gets turned into ‘hear (*audi*) me.’

Bernard for his part initially dismissed Hildegard’s letter, or at least avoided answering it.³⁴ Pressed again (by a messenger

³² Quire ‘I’ of MS Z (Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Theol. Phil. 4^o 253). See now Klaes-Hochmüller, *Epist* 3, p. x–xiii, 213–214 (with many ‘corrections’ entered by Hand ‘4,’ unfortunately not reported in Van Acker’s edition). The connection to the Rupertsberg, and its importance to Hildegard and the people around her, is confirmed by its presence in this form as well in MS Wa (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1016), an early fragment from the Rupertsberg. On the complex matter of the epistolary transmission, see too Klaes 1997.

³³ This redacted form, presented somewhat confusingly in Van Acker’s apparatus, is now re-edited in Hildegard, *Epistolarium*, 3, p. 183–185. The point in ordering her correspondence was to highlight exchanges with prominent personages, and the choice was to place that with Bernard and his letter first, even though she had initiated the correspondence – an echo of Bernard’s status in the two or three decades after his death. For the import of the term “*benedictio*” and its meanings, see p. .

³⁴ Hildegard, *Epist.* 1R, ed. Van Acker, 1, p. 6–7 for what follows.

or another letter), he answered briefly and protested that he was overwhelmed with business. But the Abbot had fully grasped what she wanted, and ducked. He wrote now on the defensive: 'I did not in the least neglect to write back' (*minime dissimulaui*). The later redaction, incidentally would also 'improve' his letter, and turned this into 'I hastened (*properaui*) to write back.' In the original letter he congratulated her courteously on the 'grace' that was in her (not notably the 'Holy Spirit' or 'learning' or 'visions'), but admonished her to recognize it as grace since God resisted the proud. Then in a single sentence, ironic if not sardonic, he neatly evaded her request for endorsement with a turn that may be construed as mockery or a backhand compliment: 'For the rest (*ceterum*), where there is a learning and a blessing (*eruditio et unctio*) that is interior and teaches about everything (*docens de omnibus*), what could we teach or advise?'

Twenty years and more on, the subsequent redactors of Hildegard's correspondence tried to make clear what Bernard should have said, or was perceived to have meant, thus adding phrases or sentences, for instance, that she was said to penetrate heavenly secrets and to know by the Holy Spirit what was beyond humans to know. Bernard is also made to ask that she remember him and those in spiritual society with him, and to affirm (*confidimus*) that she would be of great profit to 'us' since her spirit was joined to God. In a final convoluted sentence the redactors strained to articulate in his voice their intended message: he here praying that she be 'strengthened to things good' and 'instructed in things interior' and 'directed in things lasting' so that those who will put their hope in God might not despair or stumble on her account but advance more and more in the *benedictio* from God she was recognized to possess.³⁵ The well-being of 'us' and of all who will place their hope in God are made thus to hang on her instruction and solace, and indeed on her becoming deep-

³⁵ For the redacted version, see now Klaes-Hochmüller, ed., *Epistolarium*, 3, p. 183. The final sentence of the redacted letter, the 'punch-line' so to speak, is instructive for the redactors' image of Hildegard and what authorization they sought or claimed: 'Nos etiam pro te assidue oramus ut conforteris ad bona, instruaris ad interiora, dirigaris ad permansura, ita ne hii, qui spem suam in Deum posuerunt, desperando pro te claudicent, sed ut in profectu benedictionis, quam a Deo accepisse cognosceris, bene confortati in melius et melius proficient.'

ened in her calling and in the ‘blessing’ (*benedictio*) she is declared to possess.

This was the official view at the Rupertsberg by the 1170s, if not well before. Bernard’s evasive reaction back in 1147/1148 was worlds apart from the highly convoluted *benedictio* her redactors built into his letter. During Hildegard’s public ministry between the early 1150s and the late 1170s a narrative of authorization apparently steadily evolved, and whether she as the reigning abbess played any role in it is a hovering mystery. We can in any case discover its initial endpoint in the ‘life’ of Hildegard compiled and written in the 1180s by Godfrey of Disibodenberg/Rupertsberg and Theoderich of Echternach, with materials assembled in part by Guibert of Gembloux.³⁶ In this story the pursuit of authorization was undertaken not directly by Hildegard but her abbot via Volmar. He is said to have approached the archbishop of Mainz who in turn alerted Pope Eugene when he came into their region (1147/1148). The pope then had her writings fetched from Disibodenberg, took them into his own hand, and read them aloud to a large gathering. At this point Abbot Bernard is described as intervening with the pope as well to have him confirm the ‘grace’ in Hildegard. As a result Eugene sent documents giving her permission or ‘licensing’ her, and ‘animating’ her to write whatever it was she knew through the Holy Spirit.³⁷ In all this the only piece remotely verifiable comes from Hildegard’s first preserved letter to Pope Eugene, where she alluded sparsely to the pope coming into ‘our land,’ and ‘seeing’ the writings, and ‘hearing’ them in the ‘embraces

³⁶ The complex layers of this multi-part text doubtless still has secrets to yield, but the edition and foundational introduction is Klaes, *Vita sanctae Hildegardis*, 1993.

³⁷ *Vita s. Hildegardis* I.iii–iiii, ed. Klaes, p. 8–10, here p. 9–10: ‘...quo mediante [Bernard] ceterisque annitentibus monebatur summus pontifex ne tam insignem lucernam silentio tegi pateretur, sed gratiam tantam quam tempore ipsius Dominus manifestare uellet, sua auctoritate confirmaret. Ad hec reverendus pater patrum tam benigne quam et sagaciter assensum prebens litteris saluatoriis beatam uirginem uisitauit, in quibus concessa sub Christi et beati Petri nomine licentia proferendi quecumque per Spiritum sanctum cognouisset, eam ad scribendum animauit.’ When and how this came to be believed or asserted is simply not clear, nor the degree to which Hildegard herself fostered or approved of it. The redacted form of the letter (n. 35 above) speaks of a *benedictio a Deo*.”

of his heart'³⁸ – but with no talk at all of Bernard or of 'licensing' or of papal '*litteris*.'

But we face a complication. Embedded in the second book of Theoderich's life are several extended passages in the first person presumed to have been left behind by the seer herself. Fragmentary, they are at once visionary and autobiographical (or as Barbara Newman suggests, 'auto-hagiographical').³⁹ To what degree they, even if of authentic origin, underwent redaction lies beyond our ken. Strikingly, the first dealt once again precisely with authorization.⁴⁰ This longish fragment treats her visions and writing in the first person, then shifts briefly to a third-person passive to report that her writings 'were brought' (*allata*) to Mainz and then to the Pope at Trier who read them himself and also had them read aloud, and then briefly back to the first person to state that he sent her a *benedictio* along with something in writing (*cum litteris*) and ordered her to commend to writing whatever she might 'see' or 'hear'⁴¹ – that is, more or less as in the *vita* itself, whichever account came first. But notably we find not a word about a Bernardine intervention, and Hildegard herself never mentioned Bernard again. Whatever we may make of this fragment, no such writing or letter from Pope Eugene exists, and this would surely have been key to any documents she or her redactors would have taken care to preserve as an authorizing affirmation.

This narrative reached its most influential form in Gebeno of Eberbach's *Pentacronon* or '*Mirror of Future Times*' of the 1220s, the most widely transmitted compilation of Hildegardian writ-

³⁸ '...in tuo nomine tu uenisti in terram nostram...et uidisti de scriptis ueracium uisionum [note the parallel with the title of the *Protestificatio*]...et audisti ea in amplexibus cordis tui.' Hildegard, *Epist.* 2, ed. Van Acker, p. 7. For the last phrase see too the parallel to John of Salisbury's expression (n. 18 above).

³⁹ See importantly Newman 1998 and 1999.

⁴⁰ *Vita s. Hildegardis* II.ii, ed. Klaes, p. 24.

⁴¹ '...multumque de gratia Dei confidens [Pope Eugene] benedictionemque suam cum litteris michi mittens, precepit ut ea que in uisione uiderem uel audirem scriptis adtentius commendarem.' *Ibidem*. This is not a claim found anywhere in letters or writings accounted as authentically by Hildegard. In this lengthy first visionary fragment (p. 21–24), where much possesses or echoes the language and tone of Hildegard, this last phrase, beginning with its enclitic 'and' (not common in her prose), points more toward one of her redactors.

ings, which explicitly drew on that *vita* and especially her letters.⁴² Gebeno, a Cistercian prior, assured readers in his prologue that Hildegard's writings were 'canonized' by Pope Eugene in the presence of Abbot Bernard and others.⁴³ This bold assertion, perhaps betraying some anxiety about her status or reception just at the moment when efforts were also underway to canonize this prophetess, capped a narrative of authorization that would then reign for eight centuries.

If we turn to Hildegard's own verifiable texts, especially the prefaces to her three books of visionary exposition, we find there what can only be called a deep preoccupation with authorization and authenticity. This has been recounted many times, if perhaps not with the authorization issues so centrally lifted out. Hildegard completed her *Scivias* at the Rupertsberg three years or so (c. 1151) after the exchange with Bernard. The book's title rubric, as with all her subsequent books, identified its author only as a 'simple person' (*simplicis hominis*).⁴⁴ On completing her exposition she prefaced her theological revelations with a *protestificatio veracium visionum a deo fluentium*, a 'declaration' of the truthfulness of these visions flowing from God. So unusual was that first word that, excepting two early manuscripts originating at the Rupertsberg, all copies including the final redacted *Riesencodex* transformed it into '*praetestificatio*,' a 'pre-testament' or 'preface.' At its core Hildegard's 'declaratory protestation' recounted her narrative of visions since childhood and of finding the courage to write, a moving telling in the first person interwoven with assertion, doubt and rhetorical outreach all in one – but no word of any reassuring good word or 'blessing' from Abbot Bernard or Pope Eugene. In the face of 'doubt and evil opinion and various words of other people' she had hesitated to write what she saw and heard. This gave way only upon secretly confiding in a certain noble and virtuous woman (her companion Richardis) and 'that man' she had 'sought out' (Vol-

⁴² For an edition see now Santos Paz 2004.

⁴³ 'Praeterea sciendum quod libri sancte Hildegardis recepti et canonizati sunt a papa Eugenio in concilio Treuerensi, presentibus multis episcopis tam francorum quam teutonicorum et sancto Bernardo abbate clareuallensi.' *Ibidem* p. 6.

⁴⁴ Hildegard, *Scivias*, ed. Führkötter & Carlevaris, p. 3.

mar). On the strength of their affirmation (*testimonio*) she took pen to hand (*manus ad scribendum apposui*) and discovered great depths of expository power (*altam profunditatem expositionis*), then bringing this work to conclusion in ten years.⁴⁵ More, she spoke and wrote only, she insists, what she saw and heard, and invokes a scriptural verse (Habakkuk 2:2): 'Cry out therefore and write (*Clama ergo et scribe!*).'

That dating places her crucial turn to writing some six years before she approached Bernard. She plainly hoped to secure additional or far more prestigious affirmation from Abbot Bernard and then shortly after from Pope Eugene, but the strength to write came humanly from the testimonial support of her confidants Richardis and Volmar (both present in an image of her writing on wax tablets: Lucca, Biblioteca statale, MS 1942, fol. 1^v). If we take this as fundamental, we can understand fully her total loyalty to Volmar and his in turn accompanying her to the Rupertsberg. We can also better grasp that shriek of utter pain reaching even to the pope when Richardis' aristocratic family soon after had her removed from the Rupertsberg in order to set her up as head of her own house. In the end, or rather from the beginning, they, not Abbot Bernard or Pope Eugene, were her mainstay. In that earliest extant quire of Hildegard's correspondence, interestingly, letters concerning Richardis appear second, third, and fourth, after one to Pope Eugene and before one to King Frederick Barbarossa, these then followed by the original of that exchange with Bernard.

Hildegard would eventually write two more books of visionary exposition and teaching, each provided with a 'prologue.'⁴⁶ Their author is that same 'simple person,' and continuing something begun in *Scivias* the visions and writing are again dated to a king or emperor as a mark of veracity (as in charters) and the visions themselves invoked finally as conferring authenticity and authorization on the writing. But we also now find recurrent narrative patterns: always a narrative of distress and illness, of consulting secretly with a certain man (Volmar), of proceeding to write

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 5–6.

⁴⁶ This rubric appears to come more from her priest-scribes or later editors rather than from Hildegard herself, unlike her 'protestificatio.'

on his ‘*testimonio*’ and that of a young woman assistant (*testimonio cuiusdam puellae mihi assistentis, manus ad scribendum posui*).⁴⁷ The reiteration of the narrative over twenty years, often in much the same words, while not in itself questioning their authenticity in experience, stir questions about what corresponded to experience, what to preferred rhetorical expressions, and what to scribal interventions. In the case of the *Liber divinorum operum* a more personal epilogue was appended at its end (though present only in the later redacted *Riesencodex*), which speaks quite personally of Volmar’s role and the calamity of his loss before this work was completed but with no mention of a nun-assistant (possibly taken for granted or as not relevant here).⁴⁸ In any case the opening of all three books both confronted and co-opted the authorization issue right from the outset, also mocking doubters. Partly this was effected as well with a key, and oft repeated, narrative device. The command to write, in direct speech, was placed in the voice of the divine source of her visions. Each time, moreover, she is to write what she ‘saw’ and ‘heard,’ not in following ‘her own heart’ but rather ‘my testimony.’⁴⁹ Interestingly, this also appears in that first visionary fragment subsequently inserted into her *vita*.⁵⁰ The very opening lines of the preface to her second book, the *Liber vite meritorum*, make it explicit that at issue are both the visions (*uera visio, eadem visio*) and authorship itself, for she names off various of her works since *Scivias* as the product of what that ‘true vision’ had ‘shown her to be expounded’ (*mihi ad explanandum ostenderat*).⁵¹ Most readers of Hildegard now

⁴⁷ Hildegard, *Liber vite meritorum*, [Prologus], ed. Carlevaris, p. 8–9. Hildegard, *Liber divinorum operum*, [Epilogus], ed. Derolez & Dronke, p. 45–46. The ‘prologue’ was written by ‘Hand 2,’ the main scribe of this latter manuscript, prepared under Hildegard’s supervision at the Rupertsberg, and now in Ghent (University Library, MS 241).

⁴⁸ *Ibidem* p. 463–464.

⁴⁹ ‘Itaque scribe ista non secundum cor tuum sed secundum testimonium meum...’ Hildegard, *Liber divinorum operum*, Prologus, ed. Derolez & Dronke p. 45. Compare *Protestificatio* in *Scivias*, ed. Führkötter & Carlevaris p. 3.

⁵⁰ ‘Et ego uerba hec non dico de me. Sed uera sapientia dicit ista de me, et sic loquitur ad me: “Audi, o homo, uerba hec, et dic ea non secundum te sed secundum me, et docta per me hoc modo dic de te”’. *Vita s. Hildegardis* II.ii, ed. Klaes, p. 22. The usage and syntax is very ‘Hildegardian’ and more characteristic of ‘German’ than ‘Latin.’

⁵¹ Hildegard, *Liber vite meritorum*, ed. Carlevaris, p. 8.

expect this and take its expression for granted – also a reason why many earlier scholars simply dismissed her works. Both, it seems to me, fail to recognize the claim for authorization to authorship in its highly controverted context. That came, she consistently insists, from the visions themselves and a direct (second-person) command to write, while the courage and confidence to take up the writing, and to continue it, sprang from her nun-assistants and her priestly teacher and confident Volmar. We might, as a thought experiment, to capture the force of all this, imagine reading her works without being framed by the ‘*protestificatio*’ or those prefaces – that is, not to take anything from the power of the visionary expositions, indeed the contrary, but to alert us to how as readers and historians we frame them. Importantly, and intriguingly, and true to the role of letters in twelfth-century culture, that oral/written projection of voice and word from one person to another, there in her letters the authenticating frame and the exposition nearly always come as one.

That leaves Pope Eugene III, and the import of his ‘embrace of the heart,’ which was echoed by John of Salisbury. Oral messages in this period were fully as important as written letters, and some kind of *benedictio*, standard or particular, may have passed from the pope to Hildegard by way of those returning from Trier. At some point after receiving reports of his affirming embrace of her early writing (*audisti ea in amplexibus cordis tui*), but before *Scivias* was completed (thus 1148/1150), she addressed a letter to Pope Eugene in Rome to announce that more writing had been finished (*Nunc finita est pars scripturae huius*) and her ‘light’ still had not ceased.⁵² She cast her letter as ‘an admonition truly of God’ (*in uera admonitione Dei*): Her soul (*anima*) ‘desired’ that this ‘light’ now pour into the pope and rouse his ‘spirit’ into action, first of all with respect to this writing (*exsuscitet ad opus scripture istius*) so his ‘soul’ might thereby be crowned, an action which would be pleasing to God – the issue in the

⁵² Hildegard, *Epist* 2, ed. Van Acker, 1, p. 7. ‘This writing’ likely refers to more sections of the *Scivias*. Reference to ‘that same light’ suggests Hildegard had sent the Pope a letter something like that addressed to Bernard which set out her visions and call to write. If one were to date this letter and the writing to after 1151, alternatively, it would refer then to a new work. ‘That same light’ echoes her opening for instance in *Liber vite meritum*.

background once again those ‘worldly wise’ who were turning minds against her. Here she then famously likened herself to a feather it pleased the king to touch so it would miraculously fly. This may be intended as an image for the divine touch that had inspired her (as it is often taken), but it serves no less in context as an image of the touch she hoped to receive from this pope in order that she might fly. She then repeated her injunction: that the pope ‘ready this writing for the hearing of those receiving me.’⁵³ Plainly this last should be understood contextually in the light of that prior ‘embrace of the heart,’ which was manifestly no formal or written endorsement. None ever came. Hildegard and her redactors possessed, or at least chose to preserve, only one authentic letter from Eugene, written two years or so later when she was importuning him to intervene in the matter of Richardis’ removal from the Rupertsberg; this he also refused to do, leaving the matter to the jurisdiction of the local archbishop. Earlier in this letter Eugene implicitly addressed her insistent request for an authorizing word. He observed that since she possessed a spirit elevated by the fire of divine love there was hardly need for him to add more exhortatory words (*supervacaneum duximus exhortatoria tibi uerba multiplicare*). We may read this as a gesture of great respect, that he, though the pope, had nothing additional to teach or admonish her. But it also served neatly to dodge her cry for written public authorization against her naysayers or mockers.⁵⁴ Over the next three years Hildegard would write four more longish letters to Eugene, each full of furious admonition. But he never wrote back, however much he admired her writings or was truly intrigued by her as a seer.⁵⁵

⁵³ Hildegard, *Epist* 2, ed. Van Acker, 1, p. 7–8.

⁵⁴ Hildegard, *Epist*. 4, ed. Van Acker, 1, p. 10–11.

⁵⁵ The later redactors invented one letter in Eugene’s name, full of language about the ‘wonders’ and the ‘new miracle’ which she was said to be, and ending with recognition in effect of her new foundation at the Rupertsberg (perhaps the key point there), but with no allusion to her writing as such; it, the forged letter, was placed first in the final ordering of her letters. They also invented a letter in the name of Pope Anastasius IV (1153–1154), Eugene’s successor, which served to reinforce the narrative of ‘seeing’ and ‘embracing’ and ‘hearing’ her, and asked that she write something to him (*rescripta tua uidere desideramus*). The final redaction of her correspondence places the false letter of Eugene first and Anastasius’ seventh, with Hildegard’s several authentic letters to Eugene in between. The one letter from Pope Eugene now accounted authentic, with

Though read most frequently as a spiritual teacher or an ecclesiastical power-broker, Bernard of Clairvaux enjoys great acclaim as an author and master of Latin prose, an aspect his modern editor, Jean Leclercq, highlighted in numerous studies.⁵⁶ But little attention has been paid to his 'authorization' as an author, in part no doubt because in his time already and again in ours he came to be widely perceived as the spokesman *par excellence* for 'new monks' and a 'new church,' that is, as someone hardly requiring authorization. Yet this issue loomed for him too. Its dynamics played out differently and less overtly for a male preacher than it did for a female seer, and his way of handling it rhetorically may appear much craftier and more nuanced, but the underlying issues were no less real. Thirty years before Hildegard made her approach to Bernard, he had made a similar move equally crucial for him, if overlooked as such. The letter is well-known, addressed to Prior Guigo and his monk-hermits at the still new but already famed Grand Chartreuse, also generally accounted one of his earliest but in my view not interpreted fully in context.⁵⁷ Its date remains unclear, though now generally set in 1115/1117, a year or so after Bernard and a dozen others had set off to found Clairvaux in the 'vale of absinthe,' and not long before the physical and mental strain of this new foundation forced him into a year of solitary retirement (1118/1119).

Prior Guigo (1109–1136) was the formative figure in the shaping of the Carthusians. Seven years older than Bernard, he had been elected prior roughly a decade earlier at age twenty-six, a man Bernard now cast as his senior in holiness. Bernard, still struggling to secure his fledgling new foundation, saw in Guigo and

its admiration but evasion, comes ninth, and under the name of 'Adrian' (pope, 1154–1159). Plainly, as other scholars have noted, these redactors did not have an orderly file and were concerned first of all to propagate Hildegard's fame as a correspondent and authority.

⁵⁶ See Leclercq 1962–1992. For Leclercq, in their collected form the letters were transformed essentially into 'literature'; see his 'Lettres'. The issue exists of course with respect to all letter collections from this era (including Hildegard's). In my view a real historical core remains even if some particularities are brushed away.

⁵⁷ Bernard, *Epist.* 11, ed. Leclercq, 7, p. 52–60. Cf. the commentary of Gastaldelli, *Werke* 2, p. 1052–1053. For the controverted date, cf. Bernard, *Lettres*, 1, p. 214.

his monk-hermits high in the French Alps the epitome of new monks. He yearned for their blessing and approval, though he had never met or visited them. Guigo himself was well-trained in the arts, an admirer of Jerome's letters, and also a letter-writer even if only a few survive.⁵⁸ Formally, Bernard wrote his letter in response to one, no longer extant, which he had received from Guigo. The actual situation was more complex and must be teased out of Bernard's reply, as must the real stakes in their exchange. Bernard identified himself simply as '*Frater*' while addressing Guigo and the 'saints' in his band as the 'most reverend' of 'fathers' and 'dearest' of 'friends.' That echoed still the imprint of the schools with the language of 'dear friends' (a trope going back to antiquity and alive in twelfth-century discourse) and of words turned over in the mouth and sparks set off in the breast on reading Guigo's 'meditations' (echoing Ps. 39:3).⁵⁹ Bernard had not written Prior Guigo himself – not daring, he says, to interrupt their contemplative quiet with his 'importunate little scribblings' (*importunis scriptitationibus*), that is, with a letter offering his own meditations. Mutual contacts however undertook to alert Guigo to Bernard's doings and desires. After some lapse in time (*olim desideram*, Bernard says in his opening sentence) the Prior sent a letter to 'his boy' (*puero uestro*), as it says, whether this was Bernard's term or Guigo's, it too a word echoing schools and a master/student relationship.

By writing first, as Bernard explicitly noted, Guigo opened the way for him to write back – the epistolary counterpart

⁵⁸ See *Epistulae cartusianae*, ed. Greshake, p. 83–157.

⁵⁹ Bernard, *Epist.* 11, ed. Leclercq, p. 52. Étienne Gilson suggested that Bernard must have received and read Guigo's proverb-like '*Meditationes*,' of which there is a twelfth-century copy in Clairvaux. That was a false surmise; see Guigo, *Les Méditations*, p. 78–81. But Guigo very probably sent a letter with 'thoughts' much like those assembled in that collection. For what Bernard might have received in his letter from Guigo, a better and intriguing parallel might be a letter on the 'solitary life' sent to a man of learning and the court who was now choosing a dedicated religious life (*Epistulae*, ed. Greshake, p. 104–110), a move Bernard would have made only five or six years earlier. The twelfth-century copy of Guigo's *Meditationes* that originated at the Grand Chartreuse, and is counted more or less as the foundation for any edition, appears in a larger codex containing poems taught as school authors along with Boethius, all done by the same fair hand. School texts and religious texts could travel together in this era, also among Carthusians.

of a proper introduction at court. By comparison, thirty years later Hildegard, though introducing herself as a ‘wavering soul’ and ‘a poor little woman,’ made her approach to Bernard apart from any such prior inviting gesture or rhetorical nod, it seems, and explicitly asked for endorsement – possibly one reason for his dismissive reaction. Bernard seized here upon Prior Guigo’s opening to pen a self-conscious and strategic letter, even while assuring him that he had not presumed to write earlier, though itching or eager for some time to do so (*iam pridem gestienti sed non praesumentī*). Further, Bernard says he read Guigo’s greeting (*salutatio*) – whether it was short or long, perfunctory or an encouraging phrase, or a reference here perhaps to the whole letter – as heartfelt, not routine, and thus conveying a gratifying and unexpected ‘good word’ (*haec tam grata et inopinata benedictio*) – that crucial word again. This anticipatory move (*praevenire*) by the Prior extended a blessing of such sweetness, Bernard goes on, that it lent him confidence to write back. How else could he presume that amidst such holy silence (the Charterhouse) he might be heard, as if he were the boy Samuel when he cried, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears’? Absent a first word, dare he, in a courtly and spiritual faux pas, speak himself? Should he be so brazen as to bestir someone at rest in the arms of his Beloved? And then Bernard’s own first move: But what I do not dare, he asserts, Charity does, and knocks at the door of the friend (*amicū*) now in confidence (*fiducia*). Charity, mother of all friendships, hardly suffers repulse, nor does it fear to disquiet *otium*, however gratifying their contemplative *negotium*.⁶⁰ It is Lady Charity thus who excuses and enables Bernard’s rhetorical self-presentation. Roughly a decade later (summer 1126) he would employ this same trope to justify his boldness on drafting his first known letter addressed to a pope.⁶¹

But there is more, and with this we come to the real point of this extended *captatio benevolentiae*. You not only are bearing now with the one speaking (*non modo sustinere loquentem*) but graciously call forth him who was keeping silent (*tacentem insuper benigne provocare*). With Guigo’s letter – so he read or construed

⁶⁰ For this paragraph, Bernard, *Epist.* 11, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 7, p. 52–53

⁶¹ Bernard, *Epist.* 13, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 7, p. 62–63.

– he felt invited and authorized to write in return. Also gratifying, he says, was what he took to be a kind word about ‘our progress’ – whether this referred to founding Clairvaux or Bernard’s own person is not clear. To this Bernard replies: You heard, you believed, you rejoiced, you wrote, and you made me not a little happy. Above all, you took notice (*innotuit*). All this smoothed the way not only for Bernard to write back. He took it as an invitation, or at least an opportunity, to present himself as an author. I rejoice for me, Bernard says, and for you, for my *utilitas* and your *sinceritas*.⁶² ‘Sincerity’ meant rhetorically that he discounted anything in Guigo’s language as mere flattery, that which Bernard had appropriated as a *benedictio*. As for *utilitas* at this point Bernard availed himself of the opening, real or imagined, to patch directly in a shorter version of what would become his signature meditation or tractate on ‘Loving God’ (*De diligendo Deo*).⁶³ Bernard was offering for their benefit and approval an example of his own power to author ‘meditations,’ to speak. He then, just as seamlessly, moved to conclude the letter, the transition marked only by an apology for his insatiable desire to write Guigo and for weaving in this word or talk (*sermonem texere*).⁶⁴ This text plainly already existed in some form, and Bernard wanted to share it, also to show it off, as Hildegard had done with parts of her *Scivias*. He sought to do so with the spiritual community he most admired, even as Bernard would loom so large for Hildegard thirty years later. He, like she thirty years later from him, sought endorsement, or at least affirmation.

We must be clear, with respect to this extended opening or *captatio benevolentiae*, that Bernard knew when he was pulling out the rhetorical stops. We have only a handful of letters from his first ten years, and in most he wrote more simply and straightforwardly, one (alternately accounted his earliest) a brief word to the Abbot of Cîteaux introducing a possible young recruit.⁶⁵ If Prior Guigo responded to this self-presentation as author, that letter is gone. Even so for Bernard, as later for his

⁶² Bernard, *Epist.* 11, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 7, p. 52–54.

⁶³ Essentially cc. 3–9 of the letter, nearly two-thirds of the whole.

⁶⁴ Bernard, *Epist.* 11, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 7, p. 60 (= c. 10).

⁶⁵ Bernard, *Epist.* 441, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 8, p. 441.

bosom friend William of St. Thierry, Carthusians continued to embody the highest expression of spiritual life in this new age of 'return to the desert', and their endorsement was what he sought and trusted, as well as their guidance. Roughly twenty years on, about 1135, Bernard offered to Prior Bernard of Portes (a Carthusian house) his first twenty-three sermons on the Song of Songs for, he said explicitly, reading and approbation, while also claiming that it was the Prior's many and spirited letters that had urged him on to attempt this set of sermons. When in 1136 he finally sent them he asked for a quick response as to whether he should continue the project or give it up, and indeed anxiously asked again.⁶⁶ Fourteen years later still, in 1150, Bernard concluded a letter to this same Prior Bernard with uncharacteristically straightforward lines, famously characterizing himself here as the 'chimaera of our age, a monk in habit but long since not in lifestyle,' an allusion to his continuous travels and exertions in the world. Further, he asked that the Prior report back to him what people were saying about him, and for advice and prayers⁶⁷—this all in the aftermath of the failed Second Crusade. About this same time, to cite a parallel case, William of St. Thierry dedicated his *Golden Epistle*, subsequently often ascribed to Bernard, to the Carthusians set up outside Reims on the Mount of God (Mont-Dieu). In a letter-preface addressed to its prior and another priest-hermit, William, a secular cleric, then a Benedictine, now a Cistercian, listed all his writings and offered them up to these Carthusians, like David dancing before the Lord, he says, should they prove useful for the monk-hermits' edification, this the only known offering-up and listing-off of his writings for both use and affirmation.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ 'Sermones paucos in principio Canticorum Salomonis recens dictatos, en facio transcribi et tibi, cum necdum ediderim, quam citius mitto. In quo opere... tentabo procedere, si tamen me inde confortes.' Bernard, *Epist* 153, ed. Leclercq and Rochais, 7, p. 360. And then, after a delay of some time: 'Sermones super principia Canticorum quos tu petisti et ego promiseram transmittito tibi, quibus lectis peto ut, quam citius opportune poteris, tuo rescripto moneamur uel ad procedendum uel ad supersedendum.' Bernard, *Epist* 154, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 8, p. 361.

⁶⁷ Bernard, *Epist* 250, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 8, p. 147.

⁶⁸ William of St. Thierry, *Lettre*, ed. Déchanet, p. 150, 134–140, 140–142.

Bernard's on 'Loving God,' an early or partial version woven into that early Letter to Prior Guigo, became one of the Abbot's signature works, some sixty manuscripts surviving from the twelfth and earlier thirteenth centuries alone. He may well have sent versions or parts of it out more often, each with an adjusted rhetorical introduction. The letter to Guigo is in any case the only one preserved with its text integrated fully into the letter itself. Ten or fifteen years later, between 1124 and 1141, probably earlier rather than later, Bernard would send what became its full or final form to Haimeric, chancellor of the Roman church, the man with whom he teamed up to do battle during the papal schism of the 1130s.⁶⁹ Henceforth the treatise would normally circulate with a prefatory letter addressed to the most powerful Roman churchman of his day. Its mood was playful. Bernard teased Haimeric that he usually wrote with requests for prayers, not with various 'questions' (*Orationes a me et non quaestiones*), and protested that he lacked sufficient upright piety (*conversatio*) to render the first, or enough diligence or genius for the second. With that he goes on to rehearse all the usual rhetorical tropes (*in istiusmodi excusandi mos*) mustered to excuse writing or not writing, whether one pleaded 'ignorance' or 'modesty' for not writing, or agreed to write in 'obedience'. He knew all the lines, but now offered one of his own: So, receive what I have from my 'poverty', lest I be thought a philosopher if I should simply keep silent. This was a clever and ironic allusion to a proverb associated with Boethius, the school model for philosophical discourse – which is exactly what Haimeric (*questiones, non orationes*), a man of the schools himself, was seeking. He had apparently pressed the holy man with a series of theological queries. Bernard now says he will answer only one – in fact, the one on which he had a more or less ready treatise. Authorship and authorization have been made to appear here as arising through a request coming from the highest Roman church official, when Bernard in fact sent out a teaching or meditation he had worked on, and partly distributed, from his earliest days as Abbot of Clairvaux. Still,

⁶⁹ Bernard, *De diligendo Deo*, Praefatio, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 3, p. 74 for what follows.

henceforth he circulated it with this carefully crafted letter-preface addressed to Chancellor Haimeric of Rome.

Bernard, an irrepressible writer by nature, also an inveterate corrector of his writings, carefully masked his authorial drive by presenting these writings as born mostly of requests. Many interpreters, including Leclercq, have taken that self-presentation essentially at face value. A courteous *captatio benevolentiae* in rhetorical terms, it also deftly, in my view, offered a silent nod to the issue of authorization. This is particularly true for the several tractate-like pieces presented as ‘letters,’ a rhetorically agile move. As abbot he was expected to preach on feast days and offer ‘collations’ in chapter. Bernard would go to extraordinary lengths to insure that what he preached orally would get written up in corrected form and circulated across Europe, especially through the network of new Cistercian houses – this insight one of the important findings generated by the early spade work on the new edition.

Bernard’s earliest tractate,⁷⁰ penned a year or two after the letter to Prior Guigo, grew out of chapter talks, possibly at Cîteaux, but more likely in the earliest days of Clairvaux. The request to write them reportedly came from ‘Fratr Godefride,’ a cousin with whom Bernard entered Cîteaux and who in 1118 became the founding abbot of Fontenay. Bernard’s was a meditation on Benedict’s famous instruction in humility, thus likely the stuff of chapter talks. But the opening sentence of its letter-preface – Bernard’s first word there is ‘*rogasti*!’ – reports that Godfrey asked that what Bernard had spoken before the brothers (*coram fratribus locutus fueram*) be expanded in written form for him (*plentior tibi tractatu dissererem*). The preface, plainly written afterwards, spins out rhetorical pirouettes on not starting to write in fear of not finishing, set over against fearing to finish and taking pride in the work. But again the Charity that drives out fear, as with Prior Guigo, animates him to finish this work and send it on. He skillfully echoed its origins in oral discourse with his first word: ‘I am about to speak’ (*Locuturus*).⁷¹ Benedict’s teaching on

⁷⁰ For the difficult matter of dating the early writings, cf. Holdsworth 1994.

⁷¹ Bernard, *De gradibus*, Praefatio, and ‘Conversio ad eum ad quem scribit,’ ed. Leclercq, 3, p. 16, 58–59.

humility became in Bernard's reflections a discourse on pride. As he explains: He could only teach what he had learned (*Ad quod ego: non potui docere nisi quod didici*). But, he tells his cousin, if you ascend upwards from our descent, by reading what is in your heart you may learn better than from reading what is in our codex (*melius tu in tuo corde quam in nostra codice leges*).⁷² Here he skillfully blended the experiential and the oral teaching with the work of his writing (*nostra codice*), a kind of humility topos woven into a new book on humility and pride. Bernard's first sermons, as distinguished from chapter talks, assumed written form not long after exhaustion had forced him into retirement (c. 1119), and here he began with the word '*Scribere*,' to write. As sermons they required no pose of an outside request. Instead, in his telling, *devotio* drove him to write, where *occupatio* earlier had kept him as abbot from any writing except in stolen hours late at night. But released from caring for the brothers he could 'satisfy his own devotion' (i.e. by writing!) now without being a burden to them.⁷³ Writing, whether for devotion or instruction or admonition, drove him from very early on. For this he needed to protect himself with a careful scaffolding of authorization, as Hildegard did. Examples of this abound in his work, once one has become alert to it. Two further cases reveal some further rhetorical turns this could take.

Around 1127, a decade into the Abbot Bernard's ascending status in his region and beyond, the archbishop of Sens, metropolitan for Paris and an active figure at the royal court, requested that Bernard write on the duties of bishops – or so the matter is cast. In the post-Gregorian world cries for reform had continued to multiply, and Bernard's letter-tractate would come to enjoy considerable success. In this letter-preface, addressed to such a powerful local political and ecclesiastical figure, the Abbot styles himself 'Brother Bernard'. Writing mostly in simple sentences rather than discursive extravaganzas and keeping the preface remarkably short (for what became a long letter-tractate),

⁷² *Ibidem*, 'Conversio,' p. 58–59.

⁷³ The opening and closing phrases of this brief preface: '*Scribere me aliquid et deuotio iubet et prohibet occupatio. ... non arbitror eos debere grauari si propriae satisfacio deuotioni.*' Bernard, *In laudibus virginis matris*, Praefatio, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 4, p. 13.

he nonetheless unpacked all his verbal wizardry. We might liken his to a deep and restrained bow on coming into the archbishop's presence.⁷⁴ 'It pleased your highness, he says, to ask me to write something new (*novum aliquid a nobis dictatum*) – a notable way of putting his charge in the larger context of authorship and authorization and possibly with a direct echo of that statute issued by the Cistercian general chapter (n. 25 above). We are weighed down, Bernard pronounces, by the weight of this honor (*dignitatis*) but gratified by the gift of being so honored. And he goes on: Even as the petitioner's favor flatters (the archbishop here cast as petitioner as well as gracious lord), so executing this petition frightens. Who are we that we should write to bishops? But again who are we not to obey bishops? – the plural perhaps hinting that this request came as much from several provincial bishops as the archbishop himself. So, he says, I am summoned at once to refuse and to grant what I am asked. To write for such heights is above me, and not to obey is contrary to me. Danger lies in both, but the greater threat seems to lie in not obeying. Acting on what seems the least [dangerous], I do what you order. Being granted such liberal inclusion (*indulta familiaritas*) – that is, invited to speak within, or as part of, the archbishop's *familia* – dignifies the brazenness of this conferred honor. And, his last opening word, the authority of the one commanding excuses any presumption. Presumption would lie in writing something new, in issuing admonitions to bishops and archbishops, and in boldly acting as if he were part of the archbishop's inner circle.

One may hear all this as sycophantic, or shrewd – or both. But the rhetorical turn-about effectively authorized Bernard to write commandingly and at length on the office and mores of the episcopal office, and to do so as a charge coming from the Archbishop himself. Doubtless it did in some form. Bernard however turned that into authorization for a letter-tractate which Archbishop Henry may or may not have found entirely to his liking. It took a firm stance on the religious rather than political calling of bishops, and sharply critiqued the *libido domi-*

⁷⁴ For what follows, Bernard, *Epist.* 42, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 7, p. 100; and for the circumstances and teachings cf. Gastaldelli in Bernard, *Werke*, 2, p. 1068–1072.

nandi of most bishops. As for the work itself, we may wonder whether it too, like *De diligendo deo*, not only drew on things Bernard wanted to say but also recycled in part ready bits, for indeed what was supposed to be a discourse on reforming bishops ended with a section on monks. Whatever the circumstances, Bernard's prefatory letter created an aura of authorization for the letter-tractate and for its strong message of critique and reform, an authorization which he did not claim as arising from himself but rather one of the most powerful ecclesiastics in the kingdom, however much the request presupposed his rising spiritual stature together with his fiery convictions and calling to proclaim them.

Twenty-five years on, at the peak of his fame and near the end of his life, Bernard offered instruction and admonition as well to the first Cistercian pope, his former charge Eugene III. This letter-tractate evolved over three years' time or so into a major work on the papacy and the nature of religious life, *De consideratione*, which, like *De diligendo Deo*, would be of enduring influence. This work too Bernard sent out into the world with a letter-preface, addressed first of all to Pope Eugene but with an astonishing blend of self-presentation and self-authorization.⁷⁵ The verbal wizardry is so carefully balanced that, despite standard scholarly claims, it is unclear in fact whether Eugene asked for guidance or Bernard took it upon himself to instruct. An urge to admonish was certainly primary whatever the circumstances, equally to instruct, and in writing and at length. Pope Eugene, once a 'son,' was now, he acknowledged, his apostolic superior. As nearly always in these prologues, he casts the pope as 'asking' when in this case he could 'command.' Then comes another variant on Lady Charity, namely, that in these circumstances *Amor* recognizes no lord, and knows a son even when he is decked out in full vestments. Hence his approach to the person and the *persona* is torn, he says, between '*amor*' and '*majestas*,' uncertain whether his words should be '*laeta*' (cheerful) or '*lenta*' (grave). Most people approach the papal figure, Bernard shrewdly adds, in fear or with avarice. They say good things (*benedicunt*) with their faces while evil lurks in their hearts. But I, Bernard says,

⁷⁵ Bernard, *De consideratione*, Praefatio, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 3, p. 393–394 for the rest of this paragraph.

though now freed from a mother's office, am not released from a mother's affection. I loved you when you were poor in spirit, and I will love you when you are the father of the rich and the poor. I will therefore admonish you as mother, not as a master or teacher (*non ut magister sed ut mater*), with love (*amans*) even if this undertaking seems crazy (*amens*).

For all of this rhetorical play, and this care to provide an opening and authorizing for his writing, the opening sentence of this prefatory letter, indeed its first word, reveals that the impulse to write came from Bernard himself (*Subit animum dic-tare aliquid*: 'it crept into my mind to write something'). Yet what followed was not just verbal play, with a presumed intimacy and trust; weighty issues of authorship and authorization were at stake. How dare he presume to deliver written instructions on the papal office and the authentic nature of religious life to the vicar of Christ? The entire letter-preface intricately dances around his right and authority to enter this boldly into the papal presence and to deliver himself of a serious written critique, and was in effect an implicit acknowledgment of the seriousness of such an act of self-authorizing, even in the presence of the pope.

Now and again when the rhetorical mask lets down, we can glimpse Bernard's self-consciousness about the authorial word. After he had composed *On Grace and Free Will* about 1128, the most treatise-like of all his works, he sent it first to his friend William of St. Thierry. He instructed him to read it to himself initially and better alone – contrary to ordinary usage – lest it be 'conveyed into the open' (*proferatur in medium*) and its boldness (in taking on a complex theological subject) be 'made publicly manifest' (*publicetur*) when corrections might still be in order.⁷⁶ With yet another of his early confidants, a canon named Oger, Bernard formed a close and sometimes quite informal bond. He wrote once, probably during the summer of 1125, in response to hurt charges by Oger of prolonged silence. Bernard launched in, tongue fully in his rhetorical cheek: For now I omit my lack of learning, I keep silent about the humility of my profession and my profession of humility, I do not pretend to express the

⁷⁶ Bernard, *Liber de gratia*, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 3, p. 165.

vileness, not to say mediocrity, of my place or name, because whatever of this sort I might say you would not call a reasonable excuse but mere pretense for delay – you who would interpret my, as it seems to me, genuine reserve (about myself) as in your mind part indiscretion, part false humility, part real pride.⁷⁷ With Oger Bernard was trusting enough to mock all the rhetorical conventions that went into penning a salutation or *captatio benevolentiae* – and may as well have been registering or conceding here perceptions of how people received him. Alternatively, one may hear this too as yet one more witty rhetorical turn in a bid to re-ingratiate himself with a frustrated friend. Remarkably, Bernard ended this letter by likening himself to a jongleur, a performer who skips and hops and does cartwheels and whatever else it takes to hold his audience.⁷⁸ He fully understood that his writing represented, among other things, a performance. He also understood that the performance could not truly authorize itself, even if with rhetorical dexterity he sought in varying ways to do precisely that.

Bernard of Clairvaux and Hildegard of Bingen both grew up – eight years apart in age, he born in 1090, she in 1098 – at a time when the authoring of new books was still in some measure extraordinary. Both performed in genres that were in the first instance oral, preaching and visionary oracles, and both aimed at teaching, another predominantly oral genre, while they also reached out across Europe by way of letters, a genre where the oral and the written intersected. Both evolved narratives that effectively authorized their ‘new’ writing, narratives, to be clear, rooted in experience and conviction. Readers hardly approach Hildegard’s works anymore apart from that framing narrative of visionary experience since childhood and a call to write, at once vulnerable and assertive, which first appears in her letter to Bernard, becoming increasingly assertive in repeated formulations, also presumed, echoed, and re-enacted in much of her correspondence. Bernard’s case, largely unrecognized, is dif-

⁷⁷ Bernard, *Epist.* 88, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 7, 232.

⁷⁸ See the two essays on this by Leclercq, in *Recueil*, 5, p. 347–390.

ferent. If Hildegard faced suspicion as a woman and an oracle, he potentially faced resistance as an irrepressible writer and one of nearly overwhelming rhetorical power. He too sought assurance at the beginning, thirty years earlier, mostly from the holy people he most admired, whether Carthusians or William of St. Thierry. But that lifting of the mask happened only occasionally. More consistently, and almost from the beginning again, he put his voice forward in writing by way of two common moves that were both rhetorical and much more than rhetorical: his writing as excused, enabled, and emboldened by love or Lady Charity, or as undertaken against his better judgment in response to requests from personages greater than himself or in greater religious need than himself. This was not required for publishing sermons, something an abbot might do (if uncommon until the later eleventh century), and hence these justifications normally do not appear. Most at issue were his letter-tractates, which must be understood as his deliberate intervention in the age's most sensitive issues, and in writing.

Consider the two of them speaking on *divinitas*, in principle long the preserve of bishops, now increasingly taken in hand by arts and theology masters. Hugh of St. Victor, one of the most influential figures in Paris and a man who straddled the school and the religious worlds, called upon Bernard to render his opinion on several theological points, including baptism, this after some master had stirred up troubling questions (often said to be Peter Abelard, though there is no evidence of person or date). For a long time (with a claim the letter went astray) Bernard did not reply. When prodded again, he eventually did reply, with an elaborate preface that at once pronounced his unworthiness in such matters and asserted an authorization to do so. He spoke, he said, not to engage in word-battles, or because he claimed a full command of the Fathers' texts, but because 'truth' refuted this man, not Bernard, and here by implication spoke through him⁷⁹ – in this theological situation 'truth' assuming the role charity played elsewhere in authorizing his writing.

⁷⁹ 'Nam si uerum nos sapimus, ueritas ei contradicit, non nos.' Bernard, *Epist.* 77, ed. Leclercq & Rochais, 7, p. 184.

Hildegard, in a very early letter likely to the Parisian master Odo of Soissons, writes to him (*scribo*) ‘in a true vision of the mysteries of God,’ in which she ‘sees and hears and knows (*sciendo*) all at once or as if by the same faculty (*in uno modo*).’ She was here claiming for her visionary mode in effect, as Augustine had partly articulated, a ‘knowing’ implicitly on a par with the *scientia* of a theological master, or rather superior to it.⁸⁰ In still another letter to a Parisian master, possibly Odo again, she invoked the narrative of a ‘poor little woman’ but spoke (*dico*) nonetheless from amidst incense high on a mountain, sun streaming down to illumine many adversities (*multas indignationes vicissitudinis*) among great and small alike – just as a master of theology, she says explicitly, illumines hard places in the holy scriptures. Her introduction to *Liber vite meritorum* listed, remember, the written manifestations of her continuing *vera visio*, which included ‘*responsa et admonitiones*’, the cases dealt with in her letters. In the case of this Parisian master, she responded with her usual ‘listen up’ (*Audi*), then addressed questions pertinent to current disputes on the nature of the deity, especially the relation of *paternitas* to *divinitas* in divine being (widely associated with Master Gilbert).⁸¹

Despite these quite different narrative positions, and their greatly different voices and experiences, also their different commands of Latin, each projected positions for themselves in rhetoric and reality from which they presented themselves as authorized to speak, and more emphatically to speak in writing. All the same, both also sought a ‘*benedictio*’ for that writing, the elusive word which reappears repeatedly at crucial moments. At its root the word meant a ‘good word,’ in classical usage therefore ‘praise’ or ‘commendation,’ and in medieval and ecclesiastical Latin as well and more commonly a ‘blessing,’ our English ‘benediction.’ Whether we hear this term as suggesting a ‘good word’ or ‘praise’ or a ‘blessing’ we must be wary of any institutional meaning as yet. In Hildegard’s case particularly, historians have tended to read it maximally in the shadow of the subsequent

⁸⁰ Hildegard, *Epist.* 39R, ed. Van Acker, 1, p. 101.

⁸¹ Hildegard, *Epist.* 40R, ed. Van Acker, 1, p. 103.

vita and Gebeno's language of 'canonized' writing. To whatever degree Bernard or Hildegard believed they had received a 'good word' or 'praise' or a 'blessing' from those holy or empowered to give it, and were consequently animated or reassured, they did not receive a written endorsement, any form of the later '*imprimatur*.' On the other hand with the expansive presence of 'new writing,' and all the challenges that accompanied it, the matter of authorization for authorship was plainly on the horizon, and both were in their different ways probing it and trying for ways to appropriate such authorization for themselves – and both, whatever critiques and resentments they faced, with remarkable success already in their own time.

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Abstract

By what authority did medieval authors presume to write and speak? Literary scholars consider such matters routinely, while historians too often take their ‘sources’ for granted, as texts conveniently present for them to pillage. Plainly, one must make a host of distinctions with respect to eras, regions, languages, offices, social positions, and much else. This article examines the era when writing exploded in medieval Europe, what we call the twelfth century, and looks more closely at two of its most influential figures, Bernard and Hildegard, a man and a woman, an abbot and an abbess. Both aspired to write and to reach a general public, both came out of uncertain training, both claimed a kind of authority for themselves and their writings far beyond their offices, both were extremely self-conscious about themselves as authors. More, historians have placed each in quite different categories. This article re-examines that, and suggests a fresh look at each as “authorities” and “authors” and at how they claimed their ‘authorization’.

HOW JAN VAN LEEUWEN († 1378)
WAS MADE AN AUTHOR.
OPERA OMNIA AND AUTHORITY*

If I could give unto every person a piece of my spirit, which I received from Christ's own, and which I continue to receive now, I could fully teach all people, in only a little time, all the things which every man needs for his soul. It may seem very strange to say this, but as the Holy Ghost abides in me, I cannot be considered either boastful, or haughty.¹

In this quotation, the central figure of this article characterises himself perfectly. He presents himself as being inspired by the Holy Ghost, and is eager to act as a tutor, who thinks of himself as being able to teach his fellow man what to do for the salvation of his soul. We might perceive him as quite self-conscious; but what is remarkable is that this writer was 'merely' a lay brother, more particularly in Groenendaal, a priory of canons in the vicinity of Brussels.

* This article was written as part of the research project 'Visies op auteurschap in de Middelnederlandse literatuur (c. 1200–c. 1550) en weergave van dat auteurschap in Nederlandse literatuurgeschiedenissen (vanaf c. 1850)' (Ghent University; 2013–2016). We would like to thank Charlotte Cooper (Oxford) for the correction of the English text.

¹ *'Mar constic elken mensche ende alle menschen een stuc ghegheven of ghedeylen van minen gheeste dien ic ontfaen hebbe ende ontfa al nu op dese selve ure van cristus gheeste, siet soe soudic alle menschen wel ende volcomelec in enen corten oghenblic ya alle die dinghe leren dies elken ter zielen noet ware. Siet dit sciijt alte wonderlec ghesproken mar ic en mach mi niet verheffen, verhoeverdeghen noch verheffen want de heyleghe gheest rast in mi'* (from *Een ghetughe (De differentia inter naturalem et supernaturalem generationem)*; MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 162^r). In all Middle Dutch quotations the spelling of i/j and u/v/w has been adapted to the modern spelling. Punctuation has been added where necessary.

This Middle Dutch writer, Jan van Leeuwen († 1378), is one of four whose works are collected in contemporary manuscripts. The others include the mystic writer Jan van Ruusbroec († 1381) – Jan van Leeuwen’s prior – Hadewijch, a mystic female writer who is believed to have been living in Brabant around the middle of the thirteenth century, and Willem van Hildegarsberch (c. 1400), a so-called ‘sprookspreker’ or writer and elocutionist of short moral-didactic poems, who lived and travelled throughout Holland.² The works of Hadewijch seem to have been collected in Brabant (Kwakkel 1999), perhaps even before Jan van Ruusbroec and two fellow priests had gone to live in a hermitage in the Sonian Forest (1343), which was later to evolve into the priory Groenendaal.³ Her writings were certainly known in Groenendaal: Jan van Leeuwen is the first Middle Dutch author who mentions her name and writings in his own treatises (Van Oostrom 2006, p. 448), and her collected works were amongst those kept in the library of Rooklooster (Kwakkel 1999, p. 23–24), a community of canons in the Brussels region, who were connected with Groenendaal. The priory may have therefore adapted the *opera omnia*-format from the ‘Hadewijch example’, and used it for the works of its own inhabitants who were writing in their own tongue, which included Jan van Leeuwen and Jan van Ruusbroec.

1. Jan van Leeuwen

The collecting of Jan van Leeuwen’s works is especially peculiar, and worthy of further research. After all, this ‘future authority’ was a cook, a lay brother, and a man who frequently stated in his writings that he could not read or write until he entered Groenendaal.⁴ Despite the survival of his biography in Latin,

² Excellent introductions into these writers, with references to the most prominent research, can be found in Van Oostrom 2006, p. 419–456 (Hadewijch), and Van Oostrom 2013, p. 254–261 (Jan van Leeuwen), p. 242–281 (Jan van Ruusbroec), and p. 412–419 (Willem van Hildegarsberch).

³ On Jan van Ruusbroec and Groenendaal, see Warnar 2007.

⁴ ‘[...] want ic een puer leec onghellettert mensche ben ende nye in scole en quam om leeren’ (because I am an illiterate layman and I never went to school to learn). From his treatise *Van meester eckaerts leere daer hi in doelde* (*Contra errorem dogmatis*

we are only informed about the last half of Jan van Leeuwen's life, that which he spent in Groenendaal.⁵ This biography forms part of a fifteenth-century chronicle of the priory (*De origine monasterii Viridisvallis*), written by one of its canons, Henricus Pomerius († 1469). It contains only one further biography, namely that of Jan van Ruusbroec. Presumably, Jan van Leeuwen joined Ruusbroec and the others in 1344, and immediately started working in the kitchen, whence came his nickname '*bonus cocus*' ('the Good Cook'; De Leu 1885, p. 311). Some scholars estimate that he must have been in his thirties at that time; but what he did before he became a lay brother, is unknown.⁶ Jan van Leeuwen must have completed his first writings soon after Groenendaal adopted the Augustinian rule in the year 1350.⁷ In the remaining decades of his life he wrote 22 tracts (see attachment), all in the vernacular, some of which were left unfinished. He died in 1378, three years before Jan van Ruusbroec, whom the Cook deeply admired, also passed away.

However, Jan van Leeuwen himself was also venerated by the canons of Groenendaal, and not only – or perhaps even, not at all – for his meals: during his lifetime, some of his writings were already being collected, and by the beginning of the fifteenth century at the latest, his *opera omnia* had been compiled in the priory. The later monastics did the same only for Ruusbroec, who was immensely popular in the community,

magistri Eckardi), MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 888–890, fol. 135^{rb}. For other references, see De Leu 1885, p. 309 and Axters 1943, p. xxi; on this topic see also Kok 1973, p. 157.

⁵ The principal work about Jan van Leeuwen, although imperfect, remains Axters 1943. It also contains extensive selections from the writings of the Cook. A complete edition of his work does not yet exist. Recent studies about this author include: Lievens 1983, p. 504–510; Ruh 1996, p. 100–117; Geirnaert & Reynaert 1993; Desplenter 2011, p. 285–299, and Vandemeulebroucke 2015. The Latin biography of Jan van Leeuwen – which was written by Pomerius – is published in De Leu 1885, p. 309–322. An edition of a Middle Dutch translation of this biography is being prepared by Eva Vandemeulebroucke.

⁶ According to Pomerius, the Cook tried out a few trades ('*labores manuales*') before he came to Groenendaal (De Leu 1885, p. 311). Some scholars have suggested that he was a smith (Axters 1943, p. xxi) or that he worked as a chef at the ducal court of Brabant (Avonds 1982, p. 231).

⁷ Some of the Cook's writings are dated before 1352. That Jan van Leeuwen was an illiterate can hardly correspond with reality (see also Avonds 1982, p. 230–231).

and for Jan van Schoonhoven († 1432).⁸ The latter, a later prior of Groenendaal, received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Paris, and wrote exclusively in Latin. At least one of Van Leeuwen's *opera omnia*-manuscripts was decorated with historiated initials and large miniatures that depict him working in his kitchen as well as praying and writing in his cell.⁹ At that time no one in Groenendaal but Ruusbroec had been represented in such a way. Besides the collecting of his writings and these miniatures, a third attestation of the profound respect for the Cook at Groenendaal is the aforementioned Latin biography of the '*bonus cocus*'.

From the outset, the mere existence of a writer's *opera omnia* provides him or her with authority. The collecting of one author's texts was indeed a way of clearly indicating that this person's writings and thoughts should be maintained, read, and reread; that – in other words – they had authority. Furthermore, it was quite rare for the collected works of contemporary Middle Dutch authors to be 'edited', which only increases the degree of authority we might surmise Jan van Leeuwen to have had, at least when compared to his fellow authors who wrote in the vernacular, and whose writings were not collected in medieval *opera omnia*-manuscripts. As the contemporary editing of the collected works of authors largely seems to have been a phenomenon which appeared after the introduction of the printing press (Dongelmans 2006, p. 67–68), and which '[...] has made a vital contribution to the construction of authorship, the history of reputation, and the formation of the canon' (Nash 2003, p. 1), we must ask, why exactly were the fourteenth-century writings of Jan van Leeuwen – and those of Ruusbroec and Jan van Schoonhoven – collected in Groenendaal?¹⁰ Furthermore, how

⁸ For the collected works of Ruusbroec, see Kienhorst & Kors 1988; for those of Schoonhoven, see Ampe 1981, p. 284–287.

⁹ MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, II 138 (c. 1400; Groenendaal); see Deschamps & Mulder 1998, 10, p. 42–44, with further bibliography.

¹⁰ Dongelmans does not consider the handwritten book period, only antiquity (scrolls) and the period of the printed book, although we do know of several medieval manuscripts that contain the collected works of writers. Nash 2003, p. 1 for instance rightly stresses that '[t]he impulse to collect and store is certainly not a by-product of print culture alone [...]'.

did the different editors of his writings suggest that the Good Cook's entire *œuvre* was worthy of being collected? How, in other words, had he become an authority, and subsequently an author?

Two main sources might help us to answer these questions: firstly, the *opera omnia*-manuscripts themselves, and more particularly the prologues, chapter titles, and marked passages they contain; second, the already mentioned *vita* by Henricus Pomerius. However, as this was written after the first and even the second edition of the Cook's *opera omnia* had been compiled, Pomerius' arguments as to why Van Leeuwen had authority can only be considered as secondary. In this article, we will therefore concentrate on the manuscripts.

2. *Manuscripts containing Jan van Leeuwen's collected works*

Although the Good Cook was clearly an important figure in the early stages of the development of Groenendaal, he was not honoured to such an extent that his treatises were distributed using exactly the same phrasing as that with which he wrote them. It is clear that the Groenendaal brothers edited his texts, both in terms of form, and of content. As such, the different manuscripts with the Cook's (full) treatises prepared over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see attachment) – in which we might discern a curious series of adaptations – form the basis of this article. A quick overview of the most significant manuscripts to contain the Cook's texts will be given in reverse chronological order, as only the latest set includes the complete *opera omnia*. In the 1540s, a lay brother in the priory of Bethlehem, a canon house in Herent (in the vicinity of Leuven), copied two manuscripts containing the Cook's collected works.¹¹ The content of the oldest of these two volumes, MS Brussel, KB, 667 (1540), was copied and transmitted in more or less identical form in MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, prepared

¹¹ These manuscripts are MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 667 (1540) and MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 888–890 (1543–1547). The second manuscript was completed by another scribe. For these manuscripts, see Deschamps & Mulder, 10, p. 1–9, with further bibliography.

around 1460 in Brabant.¹² Only six leaves remain of a third copy of that first volume, the aforementioned MS Brussel, KB, II 138 (see no. 9), written around 1400 at Groenendaal, and containing two wonderful miniatures and six historiated initials.¹³ It is not at all certain – but neither can we exclude the possibility – that a copy of the second volume of the collected works accompanied these two fifteenth-century copies of the first volume.

This uncertainty is connected to the manner in which Van Leeuwen's writings were collected and edited.¹⁴ It seems that a first 'edition' of five texts was compiled around 1355, during the Good Cook's life. Shortly before the beginning of the fifteenth century, a second edition was made, which comprised at least the first five writings together with four further treatises, resulting in a collection of nine of what his fellow brothers in Groenendaal must have seen as Van Leeuwen's most important writings. These nine make up the texts that can be found in MS Brussel, KB, 667 (1540) and MS Brussel, KB, IV 401 (c. 1460), discussed above.¹⁵ Some scholars have suggested that the Groenendaal editors assembled unfinished or 'dangerous' texts, or those that might have been considered less important, in a separate, second volume (Geirnaert & Reynaert 1993, p. 192). Contrary to what these scholars assumed, it might also have formed part of the second edition.¹⁶ MS Brussel, KB, 888–890 (1543–1547), the second manuscript to have been copied by the lay brother in Herent (see above), is the only known textual witness of that second volume of the *opera omnia*.¹⁷ Judging by the fifteenth-century excerpts of the

¹² For this manuscript, see Deschamps & Mulder, 10, p. 60–64, with further bibliography.

¹³ Two more historiated initials of the original manuscript are kept in MS Cape Town, National Library of South Africa, Grey 3 c 4, fol. 102^r (see Geirnaert & Reynaert 1993, p. 427).

¹⁴ See Geirnaert & Reynaert 1993, and Delteijk 1947, p. 29–44.

¹⁵ In these two manuscripts, the four texts from the second edition precede the five that were (also) part of the first edition (see attachment).

¹⁶ Geirnaert & Reynaert 1993, p. 191–192, 205 distinguished three editions, but there seems to be no reason for the second volume of the *opera omnia* not already to be part of the second edition (see attachment), as they largely show the same design and set-up.

¹⁷ For MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 888–890, see Deschamps & Mulder 1998, 10, p. 5–9, with further bibliography.

Cook's writings that have survived, it was less well-known than the first volume (Geirnaert & Reynaert 1993, p. 192). An example of its 'dangerous' character lies in its containing one of Van Leeuwen's more famous writings, *Van meester eckaerts leere daer hi in doelde* (*Contra errorem dogmatis magistri Eckardi*).¹⁸ In this text, the Cook aggressively attacks Meister Eckhart († c. 1328), the German Dominican mystic who made a series of statements that were declared heretical by the pope in 1329. From a dogmatic perspective, Jan van Leeuwen's *Van meester eckaerts leere daer hi in doelde* might be seen as 'complicated' (Geirnaert & Reynaert 1993, p. 192), but it is also a text in which the author's temperament is quite clearly apparent: he denounces Meister Eckhart, among others, as '*metten duvele beseten*' (possessed by the devil; MS Brussel, KB, 888–890, fol. 135^{ra}), '*een puer onghelovich sot*' (a disbelieving fool; idem), and having '*alsoe vele ghewaregher oeffeninghen alsoe die paddesteert heeft*' (as much piety as the tail of a toad; idem).

3. Editing Jan van Leeuwen in Groenendaal

There are several indications that the texts in the *opera omnia*-manuscripts are not quite as Jan van Leeuwen had written them. A comparison of some of the fifteenth-century manuscripts containing individual or smaller groups of texts to copies within the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *opera omnia*-volumes reveals different readings and even drastic changes, some of which might be due to the fact that the first mentioned fifteenth-century manuscripts contain copies of the writings from the first edition. Two manuscripts must indeed go back to the first small collection of five writings by the Good Cook, 'published' around 1355. The first of these two was written in 1425 in the monastery of Diepenveen, the most significant of the *Devotio Moderna* convents of canonesses, and contains only one text by Van Leeuwen, *Van vijfterhande bruederschap* (*De quintuplici confraternitate*); the second manuscript was completed in 1459 by Peter von Zutphen, a lay brother in the canon monastery

¹⁸ See Ruh 1996, p. 114–116, and McGinn 2012, p. 71–75.

at Rebdorf (Bavaria).¹⁹ The five texts in the last manuscript were ‘translated’ into what we could call ‘pseudo-German’ (Desplenter 2011, p. 292–293). The fragmentary manuscript with the miniatures (= MS Brussel, KB, II 138), the manuscript dating to c. 1460 (= MS Brussel, KB, IV 401), and the two sixteenth-century volumes (= MS Brussel, KB, 667 and MS Brussel, KB, 888–890) must date from a second edition, which presumably took place around 1400 (see attachment).

Not only do we notice ‘editorial changes’ when comparing the manuscripts, but such changes are also announced in the prologue to the first volume of the *opera omnia*: ‘Nochtan soe eest te weten dat in den navolghenden boeken onder tijt wat toe of afghedaen of verwandelt es, na eysschinghe der materien, ocht om die materien te bat of te meer te verclaerne [...] ende die maniere van sinen sprekenes oec ondertiden wat mede verwandelt’ (One should know that in the following books, things have been added or left out or altered over the course of time as the material required, or to clarify it better or more fully [...] and his [= the Cook’s] way of writing has also been modified over the course of time; MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 270^{va}). This statement applies to the second edition.

A first significant change to the second edition *opera omnia*-manuscripts was made rather innocently, and was intended to aid the reader, as – due to Van Leeuwen’s somewhat chaotic style – some passages are quite difficult to understand. The editors divided the treatises into ‘chapters’, together with summarising rubrics in the vernacular. Although the first edition manuscripts contain small marginal rubrics in Latin, these are not to be found in the same place as the summarising rubrics in the second edition. The Middle Dutch chapter titles in the second edition are certainly the work of editors, as the Cook is referred to in the third person, for instance in the chapter entitled ‘*Van des cocs ghevoelen hoe noede dat hi ydelike soude sweren*’ (On the Cook’s

¹⁹ On the first manuscript, MS Deventer, Stadsarchief en Athenaeumbibliotheek, I, 55, see Delteijk 1947, p. 29–31. On the second, MS Pommersfelden, Bibliothek Graf von Schönborn, 280/2881, see Desplenter 2011, p. 285–299, with further bibliography.

feelings, how he would not swear in vain).²⁰ Other additions were meant to alter the Cook's somewhat awkward formulations, or to soothe his tone. This occurs less in the second volume of the *opera omnia*, which confirms the contention that one of the volumes was kept for 'dangerous' (and incomplete) treatises, and the assumption that little of what it contained reached readers outside Groenendaal (with the exception of the sixteenth-century copy). For instance, in one of his two treatises on the Decalogue, to be found in the second, 'dangerous' volume, Jan van Leeuwen fulminates against those people who give full rein to their desires by acting against nature. He adds that this is even more sinful than for a monk or a bishop to have intercourse with a nun, and furthermore, he states that the 'unnatural way of spilling seed' is regrettably common, especially amongst monks.²¹

A second, more drastic, change occurs where several original passages were left out of the second, and even the first editions. One example again concerns impurity, apparently a theme the Cook liked to comment upon, such as in his treatise *Van vijfterhande bruederschap* (*De quintuplici confraternitate*). In the second edition manuscripts, a passage taking this sin as its subject is marked with a cross and accompanied by a marginal warning that it should not be read in the refectory, and certainly not in women's communities.²² Remarkably enough, this rather

²⁰ From *Vanden x gheboden gods* (*De praeceptis decalogi*); MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 15^{vb}.

²¹ 'Nu hier na volghet de seste partie die seswerf swaerlike sundeghen, dat sijn alle die ghene die haer quade vleeschelike onsuvere gheloest driven ende haer saet willens ende wetens verderven jeghen natuere alsoe datter nummermeer vrucht af comen en mach. Siet dits mere sonde, dat houdicker voer, dan oft een monic oft oec een bisscop sijn saet met eenre nonne saide. Acharme, dese onnatuerliker verderffenisse geschiet nu soe vele in eertrike, ya ende sonderlinghen onder gheestelijc volc van habite [...]' (MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 888–890, fol. 27^{ra}). On Jan van Leeuwen's two treatises on the Decalogue, see Desplenter 2010.

²² See for instance MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 208^r (right margin); furthermore see Delteijk 1947, p. 113. In the second volume of the *opera omnia*, similar passages on the same theme of impurity are less obviously commented upon within the text itself, by simply stating that they should or do not have to be read in the refectory (e.g. in *Hoe datmen alle ongherechtigheit laten sal ende christus roepe ghetrouwelijc na volghen sal* (*De desertione injustitiae et obedientia vocationis Christi*); MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 888–890, fol. 115^{va}).

extensive passage was left out of the two fifteenth-century manuscripts that make up the first edition.²³ This suggests that when the first edition was ‘published’ in around 1355, Van Leeuwen’s texts had already been adapted to some extent. However, this ‘editing’ was most likely to have been quite limited, because on the whole, the pseudo-German witness is more complete than those making up the second edition.²⁴

4. *Creating an authority*

The editors did not simply wish to ‘publish’ the Good Cook’s writings in an acceptable form, they also eagerly sought to invest him with authority, both implicitly by collecting his works, and explicitly by building up an image of him. Such indications can be found in the prologues, chapter titles, notes, miniatures and initials in which the Cook is explicitly represented as a writer, and these are all features that were added to the *opera omnia*-manuscripts. In what follows, we will concentrate on the textual additions.

The oldest prologue of the second edition opens the treatise *Vanden drien coninghen* (*De tribus magis*), and is part of the fragmentary manuscript (= MS Brussel, KB, II 138; c. 1400). Here, Van Leeuwen is explicitly described as a lay brother, and more specifically, as a cook, ‘*als men in sinen boeken hier na bescreven ghevoelen mach*’ (as one may perceive in the writings hereafter; fol. 4^{ra}). Furthermore, the editors stress the fact that Jan van Leeuwen was not young when he came to Groenendaal, and that at that time – which must have been around 1344 – he was ‘*zeere ruut leec ende onghelleert*’ (a very uncivilised lay person without schooling; fol. 4^{ra}). However, in Groenendaal he apparently learned how to read and write; the editors add that they hope this to have been with the help of the Holy Spirit. A similar – although extended – prologue is to be found in

²³ MS Deventer, Stadsarchief en Athenaeumbibliotheek, I, 55 (see no. 19) and MS Pommersfelden, Bibliothek Graf von Schönborn, 280/2881 (see no. 19); furthermore, see Delteijk 1947, p. 113.

²⁴ See Desplenter 2011, p. 285.

MS Brussel, KB, IV 401 (fol. 270^{rb-vb}).²⁵ In this prologue, the editors further highlight the Cook's lack of schooling, for example, in their suggestion that if someone were to wonder where Van Leeuwen learned theology, he should examine one of the writings in the *opera omnia*, in which the Cook states that he acquired it in the same school as Saint Peter and his brother Andrew.²⁶ In that text, *Vanden drien coninghen (De tribus magis)*, the Good Cook asserts that '*een yeghelic mensche die in Cristus binnenste metten gheeste gheraect, meester van theologyen ghemaect [wert]*' (every person who enters Christ's inner self in spirit, is made master in theology; MS Brussel, KB, IV 401 fol. 91^{vb}). We might therefore surmise that it was precisely Jan van Leeuwen's lack of schooling that made him such an authority on mystical matters; in other words, he was not hampered by bookish knowledge, and could therefore claim more authenticity by way of experience. In any case, the Good Cook himself thought little of such knowledge, and judged that it was not a *conditio sine qua non* for a mystical understanding of the world: '*Want het helpt luttel goeds of niet dat een mensche of een meester alle menechvoldecheyt der scriftueren hadde. [...] [e]s dat sake dat wi niet en hebben gheestelec overnatuerlec bekinnesse ons selfs ende Gods ende ewegher dinghen blivende in ons*' (Because it is of little or no help to know all of the writings, if we do not first have spiritual, super-sensible knowledge of ourselves and of God, and of the eternal things within us).²⁷

However, the already mentioned pseudo-German manuscript (1459), which is believed to represent the first edition of the oldest part of the *opera omnia*, features yet another prologue,

²⁵ In MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, the prologue was left to the very end of the manuscript, but it was clearly intended to be placed at the beginning (as is the case in the sixteenth-century MS Brussel, KB, 667). Possibly, the prologue was only written after the compiling and editing had taken place, and then was to be shifted to the front by the next copyist or editor.

²⁶ '*Want in enen van sinen boken soe scrift hi dat yement moght vraghen waer hi sine theologie ocht sine leeringhe gheleert hadde, daer op antwert hi, dat hise gheleert heeft tot dier scolē daer sente peter ende andries sijn broeder gheleert hebben*' (MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 270^{rb-vb}).

²⁷ From *Een ander wonderlyc boec van tienderhande materien tracterende (De articulis)*; MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 133^{vb}.

in which this lack of schooling is not stressed at all.²⁸ Here, the authority seems to be derived at least partially from the fact that Jan van Leeuwen lived and worked in the vicinity of Jan van Ruusbroec (*‘das gemachet hat ein geistlich leye der ein koch was des erwerdigen geistlichen fatters her Johannes russbroch’*; see no. 28). This may be connected with the fact that this manuscript was intended for the use of lay brothers in Bavaria, a public which did not seem to have the same frame of reference as the readers of the different Middle Dutch manuscripts. Although research now tends to emphasise Jan van Leeuwen’s lack of schooling, it may be a feature that was not originally given the importance it was later to receive in the second edition of his collected works. In that case, the creation of an author – and of an authority – who had been illiterate for decades until he was inspired by the Holy Ghost, could have been a strategy used deliberately from the beginning of the second edition onwards.

After the prologues, the chapter titles in the *opera omnia*-manuscripts inform us as to how the Good Cook’s writings were intended to be interpreted in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. From those chapter titles, a somewhat different picture arises.²⁹ They seem to have been added as part of the second edition, as they do not appear in the (two) copies of the first, most likely to direct or facilitate reception. An analysis of these titles clearly shows that the editors composed them by using the text itself, without having recourse to other sources. For instance the already mentioned title, *‘Van des cocs ghevoelen hoe noede dat hi ydelike soude sweren’* (On the Cook’s feelings, how he would not swear in vain), was paraphrased from *‘nochtan haddic liever toten douds dage inder hellen gront te sine dan dat ic [...] die minste heet bi eeneghen dinghen zwoere diemen zweeren mochte’* (However,

²⁸ *‘Hier vahet an ein geistliche bedudung vf das ewangelium das man liset vf der heilige drey konung tag das gemachet hat ein geistlich leye der ein koch was des erwerdigen geistlichen fatters her Johannes russbroch inden closter zu groenendale by brussel in brabant’* (Here begins a spiritual explication on the gospel read at Epiphany, which has been made by a spiritual lay man, who was a cook of the estimable spiritual father Johannes van Ruusbroec, in the Groenendaal cloister near Brussels in Brabant); MS Pommersfelden, Bibliothek Graf von Schönborn, 280/2881, fol. 1^{ra}.

²⁹ All quotations are taken from MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, but our analysis includes all chapter titles in all of the *opera omnia*-manuscripts.

I would rather be in hell's hold until Doom's Day, than to swear even the smallest of oaths).³⁰

The way in which the editors selected and adapted the information for the titles enables us to surmise how they wished to represent Jan van Leeuwen so that his public would find him authoritative. In other words, by analysing the chapter titles, we can see how the editors interpreted 'authority', and why they, and possibly others, thought the Good Cook fitted that model. For instance, the wording used in the chapter entitled '*Hoe gront-oe[t]moedecheyt ende ghewareghe caritate sijn de II princepale dooghden. Ende hoe hoghe dat de goede prioer broeder jan van ruusbroec ende sijn Coc daer in stonden*' (How utter humility and true love are the two principal virtues, and how the good prior Jan van Ruusbroec and his Cook cultivated those to the highest degree; MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 189^{vb}), which appears in *Redene ende ondersceyt* (*De electione divina*), suggests that both Ruusbroec and the Cook will be shown to share these virtues. However, in the chapter itself, it is clear that those are only ascribed to Ruusbroec, and not to Jan van Leeuwen. Nevertheless, the editors appear to add that Van Leeuwen also possessed the two virtues in order to promote the Good Cook, and/or because they were profoundly familiar with his texts.

Attempting to categorise the chapter titles in MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, reveals an effort to stress the exemplariness of the Good Cook, and not his lack of schooling. Indeed, some titles describe how he embodies virtuous qualities (see above), and many of the titles also mention anecdotes or examples drawn from his life from which the reader may learn: '*Van vij onmenschelijke allendicheiden die de coc in eender nacht ghedoechede ende leet*' (On seven inhuman tragedies the Cook underwent and suffered in one night; MS Brussel, KB, 888–890, fol. 63^{va}). Furthermore, in some cases, the editors have to some extent adopted Van Leeuwen's own statements in which he himself claims to have authority. Some titles follow the Cook's own words in granting him authority on religious matters: '*Vanden vij gaven des heylechs gheests, die yerste es ghenoeemt na des cocs ghevoelen godleke*

³⁰ From *Vanden x gheboden gods* (*De praeceptis decalogi*); MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 16^{ra}.

minne, dair hi sere hoghe af sprekt (On the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the first of which is called godly love, according to the Cook, who speaks highly of it).³¹ What is even more striking is that Jan van Leeuwen's authority is explicitly defended – and thereby increased – from the censure of past critics, and implicitly from those both present and future: '*Hoe die coc oetmoedelec vergiffenisse bidt, es dat hi yet messcreven heeft in sijnre leringhen, ende hoe hi begrepen was*' (How the Cook humbly asks for forgiveness, if he has written anything false in his teachings, and how he was understood),³² and '*Van iij poenten dair hi af begrepen was ende sijn ontscont dair af*' (On four points, how he was understood, and how he was innocent in those cases).³³

Besides the full texts, MS Brussel, KB, IV 401 and MS Brussel, KB, 667 also contain five excerpts, all with small rubrics.³⁴ Not unexpectedly, almost all of these tend to stress the Good Cook's authority significantly more than the titles in the full writings do, presumably because these were already collected as an entity, which, as already mentioned, generated authority in itself. For instance, one excerpt is introduced by the following rubric: '*Merct zeer wel hoe vele quade comen van overmoedecheyt na des Cocs leeringhe*' (Mark very well how much evil comes from pride, according to the teachings of the Cook; MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 257^{ra}). Just as his prior, Jan van Ruusbroec, Van Leeuwen is considered a tutor, although not on the grounds of his education, but because of his virtues, his exemplary life, and finally because of his advanced knowledge of mystic matters, in which he was eager to teach others (*Lebemeister*): '[...] *ic en constu niet ghesegghen noch bescriuen hoe sere dat ic alle menschen minne ende begheer te bringhen in die levende binnenste ons heren jhesu cristi*' (I am not able to tell you or to describe how much

³¹ From *Van vijfterhande bruederschap* (*De quintuplici confraternitate*); MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 231^{va}.

³² From *Van vijfterhande bruederschap* (*De quintuplici confraternitate*); MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 253^{va}.

³³ From *Van vijfterhande bruederschap* (*De quintuplici confraternitate*); MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 254^{vb}.

³⁴ MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fols 259^{rb}–260^{vb} and MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 667, fols 256^r–257^{ra}. The two manuscripts hold the same five excerpts, although not in the same order.

I love all people, and wish to bring them into the living inner self of Our Lord Jesus Christ).³⁵ Quite simply, his writings are worth following, as the rubric accompanying another excerpt makes clear: '*Merct wel wat de coc scrijft vander hoverdecheyt*' (Mark well what the Cook has written on pride; MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 256^{va-b}). Every explicit argument why the reader should 'mark' this is lacking; implicitly, Jan van Leeuwen is to be considered as an authority in these and other matters.

Another feature of the second edition is the editors' highlighting of important passages through the addition of red lines or Latin and Middle Dutch indications in the margins, including '*nota*', '*nota bene de sancto augustino*', '*nota (super) optime*', and '*Meerct hier groet wonder*' (Note something very curious here).³⁶ MS Brussel, KB, 667 (258 fols) contains more than 270 such marked passages.³⁷ In the extended prologue discussed above, the editors

³⁵ From *Een ghetughe (De differentia inter naturalem et supernaturalem generationem)*; MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 157^{rb}. On Johannes Tauler's concept of the '*Lebemeister*' (versus the '*Lesemeister*'), see Warnar 2005, p. 124.

³⁶ These markings do not occur in the excerpts in MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401 and MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 667 (see above), nor in the texts which were written at the end of MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 888–890 (fol. 188^{va}–285^{vb}) and are not part of Jan van Leeuwen's *opera omnia* (see Deschamps & Mulder 1998, p. 8). Furthermore, in MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, the entirety of *Die rolle vander woedegher minnen (De ardentis amore Dei)* is highlighted by a red line in the margin.

³⁷ In general, we may distinguish five different categories of markings: 1) some focus on persons, e.g. '*Merct zeer wel wat hier steet van heer jan van ruusbroec*' (Mark very well what is written here on Master Jan van Ruusbroec; MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 190^v (lower margin)); 2) some on groups, e.g. '*Nota bene vanden prelaten*' (Nota bene on the prelates; MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 238^r (right margin)); 3) some on aspects of content, e.g. '*Nota bene van die oetmoedecheyt*' (Nota bene on humility; MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 88^v (lower margin)); 4) some indicate that the marked passages should be read carefully, so that they cannot be misinterpreted: '*Cave verbum non sed sensum*' (Mark the word, and not the meaning; MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 667, fol. 125^v (left margin)); and finally, 5) some indicate the context in which the passage should or should not be read, e.g. '*Van der poente voer screven [...] en sal men niet lesen int ghemeyn in ghenen reeffere ende sonderlinghe van vrouwen personen [...]*' (One shall not read the lessons written above in public, such as in refectories, and especially not in women's communities; MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, fol. 208^r (lower margin)).

have sought to explain that these features are designed to draw the reader's attention to certain passages that are particularly authoritative: '*Voert soe sal men weten ende merken soe waer ghescreven es "nota" dat daer wat merkelecs ende notabels es, ende dies ghelikes daer die strepen ghemaect sijn [...]*' (Furthermore, be aware that the word '*nota*' directs the reader to passages that are particularly remarkable and worthy of note, as does a red line in the margin; MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 270^{va}).³⁸

These marked passages do not necessarily stress or repeat what is indicated on the Cook in the chapter titles.³⁹ They show what the reader can expect during the process of mystical growth and unification with Christ as a whole, through the views and experiences of the Good Cook himself. We might divide these passages into four main groups:

1. passages that highlight the Cook's feelings of unworthiness, and his fears that he might not have or might lose divine grace: '*Want van mi selven soe en hebbic noch soe en vermaghic niet goets, maer als de gheest gods coemt ende gheeft een vol ghetughe minen gheest, siet dan soe spreke gode behaechlec ya wat ic voertbringhen wille heylechs dinc*' (Because there is nothing intrinsically good within me, nor can I do anything good, but if God's spirit comes and he heeds my spirit, then I will speak with God, assured of the holy things that I will produce);⁴⁰
2. passages that emphasise the positive consequences of the unification with Christ: '*Want ghi selt weten dat ic doer de wonden ende oec uut der levender ghebenedider siden ons heren jhesu cristi siet daer uut soe hebbic alle mijn heylecheyt ende oec alle mijn leringhe der caritaten ghesoghen ende vercreghen*' (Because you should know that it is through his wounds, and from our Lord Jesus Christ's living, blessed body, that I have drawn

³⁸ In MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 667 the scribe did not use such markings to highlight the passages, but an 'a' in the margin to mark the beginning of the passage, and a 'b' to mark the end.

³⁹ The following conclusions are based on our analysis of all marked passages in MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, IV 401, notably those within the five writings that were already part of the first edition (see attachment).

⁴⁰ From *Een ghetughe (De differentia inter naturalem et supernaturalem generationem)*, MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 166^{rb}.

and received all of my holiness and all of my teachings on love);⁴¹

3. passages in which negative side effects of the process of mystical growth are stressed; the reader is shown that suffering forms an integral part of the unification process, as a counterpart to Christ's Passion for mankind; as Jan van Leeuwen introduces quite some biographical elements into these very passages, the reader is invited to identify with the Cook, or to at least use him as a model by which to live life: *'Ende dicwile soe claeghic over de minne ende wijt haer al [...] De minne sij maect mi haestelec van gheesteleken gaven arm ende haestelec rike ende ic moets alles staen even ghelike. Want ic weet mijn misval wien claghen, mar minen last ende mijn armoede dat moetic allene draghen. Het es waer ic lie wel dats een groot deel coemt bi mijnre scout'* (And many times I complain about love, and blame her for everything [...] Love quickly makes me poor, and rich in spiritual gifts, both of which I have to withstand equally. Because I know to whom I should complain my misfortune, but my trouble and my misery I must bear alone. It is true, I confess, that a large part of this is my own fault);⁴²
4. passages in which the Cook underlines his own missionary capacities, by stating that his ultimate goal is to be the equal of Christ: *'Ware dat sake dat alle menschen consten wandelen in mijns selfs herte ende in mijn binnenste gheheylheyt ghelikerwijs dat ic wandele in die binnenste ons heren jhesu cristi seker soe soude mi alle mens[c]hen minnen saghense mijn herte aen'* (If all people could walk into my own heart, and into my inner being, just as I walk into our Lord Jesus Christ's inner self, all people would certainly love me if they were to see my heart).⁴³

By marking these passages, the Groenendaal editors turned Jan van Leeuwen's extensive writings, which partly must have

⁴¹ From *Redene ende ondersceyt* (*De electione divina*), MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 197^{rb}.

⁴² From *Redene ende ondersceyt* (*De electione divina*), MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 191^{vb}.

⁴³ From *Een ghetughe* (*De differentia inter naturalem et supernaturalem generationem*), MS Brussel, KB, IV 401, fol. 157^{rb}.

served as his personal step-by-step plan, into a manageable, stimulating and accessible mystical guide for others. The views and experiences of someone who is explicitly presented as a layman without schooling must have been perceived as accessible to a wider audience, so that it too might take its first steps towards unification with Christ.

If we compare these marked passages in the second edition manuscripts with the marginal notes in those of the first edition, we might perceive an evolution in the way in which the Good Cook was presented. The first edition manuscripts contain Latin notes in the margins which do not correspond to the *nota*'s or chapter titles in those of the second edition. However, they function in more or less the same way, as they serve more to structure the text than to mark notable passages, and are used by the editors as opportunities to emphasise certain aspects of the text, and even to introduce their own interpretations. Interestingly, the notes differ from the *nota*'s and chapter titles in the way in which they represent Jan van Leeuwen to the reader. In MS Deventer (SAB, I, 55), his function as an example, and his role as a tutor are stressed. Furthermore, Jan van Leeuwen is never referred to as 'a' or 'the' cook, whereas in the second edition, the simple sobriquet *cook* is used systematically. His name is also never mentioned in the notes, unlike that of his prior, which even occurs a couple of times accompanied by the title '*heer*' ('Master'). We might therefore conclude that by the time the second edition was prepared – c. 1400 or later, but certainly after the death of Van Leeuwen – the Groenendaal editors were promoting the Good Cook's writings, whilst simultaneously seeking to augment their authority, not by connecting them to a real life lay brother, but to a 'construct' – 'the Cook' – dressed up with aspects that the editors considered particularly useful, although not necessarily corresponding to historical reality.

5. *Spreading Jan van Leeuwen's authority*

The first edition, comprising five texts, must have been completed in or shortly after 1355. As the surviving textual witnesses

of that edition were both made in the fifteenth century, in communities connected to the *Devotio Moderna*, it is impossible for us to have any insight into the fourteenth-century public. It is most likely that the first edition was initially only intended for the use of the Groenendaal monks. The second edition once was available in a richly decorated manuscript made in the Groenendaal scriptorium,⁴⁴ but it was undoubtedly quickly disseminated outside the priory. MS Brussel, KB, IV 401 for instance, prepared around 1460, was most probably manufactured for the nobleman John IV of Nassau and his wife Mary of Loon. Later, the couple donated it to a nunnery, possibly that of Vredenberch near Breda, an abbey founded by Mary of Loon in 1476 (Brinkman 1993, p. 180–183).

We do not have many manuscripts containing Van Leeuwen's full texts at our disposal – some might be lost – and the impact his writings seem to have had in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and even seventeenth centuries might therefore seem surprising.⁴⁵ In other words, the Groenendaal editors' strategies for the promotion of Jan van Leeuwen as an authority seem to have succeeded on the whole. That could be confirmed by what was written about the Good Cook in the centuries following his death. For instance, Johannes Busch († c. 1480) – who wrote a chronicle on the *Devotio Moderna* centre, the cloister of Windesheim – considered the Cook to have made more progress in mystical experiences than his prior Ruusbroec (Axters 1943, p. LXVII). Furthermore, Van Leeuwen's *opera omnia* were copied in the 1540s, by and for the lay brothers of Bethlehem in Herent (see above). In the seventeenth century, the ecclesiastical historian Aubert Miraeus († 1640) stated that Jan van Leeuwen's works should be translated into all languages (Axters 1943, p. LXVII), and in the 1660s, the Good

⁴⁴ Fragments are contained in the already mentioned MS Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, II 138, and in MS Cape Town, National Library of South Africa, Grey 3 c 4.

⁴⁵ The library of the tertiary convent of St. Barbara in Delft held two 'books' which possibly contained writings by the Good Cook: nr. 65 in the library catalogue (c. 1475), '*Item Ruusbroec van die koc*', and nr. 67, '*Item dat boetgen van die koc*'. The catalogue of St. Barbara is now kept in the Royal Library in The Hague (MS 130 E 24), and was edited in Moll 1866, p. 211–285.

Cook served as a model for a long poem written by a canon of St. Maartensdal in Leuven. It was entitled ‘*Cocus bonus ofte Geestelijke sinne-beelden ende godtvruchtighe uut-legginghen op alle de ghereetschap van den kock*’ (*Cocus bonus* or Spiritual parables and godly explanations for all the cook’s utensils). Although the text was printed twice, it remained the last manifestation of Jan van Leeuwen’s authority and reputation.⁴⁶ He then seems to have lain forgotten until the middle of the nineteenth century.

6. Conclusion

There can be no doubt that over the last few decades, Jan van Leeuwen’s position in the history of Dutch literature has been significantly strengthened (see no. 2). This position would hardly seem a natural one for him to adopt, since, according to some of his texts, he never went to school, had no theological authority whatsoever, and testifies himself to not having known to read or write before entering Groenendaal. Nevertheless, a couple of years later, he finished his first treatises. Although these were without doubt influenced by Jan van Ruusbroec, their style and sometimes content largely differ from Van Leeuwen’s prior’s well-considered writings. However, style most certainly was not the feature which made the Groenendaal monks collect and distribute his works; it must therefore have been his perceived authority in spiritual matters that the priory wished to preserve and spread by editing and ‘publishing’ his tracts – not just once, but twice. By doing so, the editors put an allegedly unschooled lay brother who wrote in the vernacular on the same level as Ruusbroec, who also wrote in the vernacular, but was a priest, and as Jan van Schoonhoven, who held an academic degree and wrote solely in Latin.

Moreover, our analysis of the prologues, chapter titles and *nota*’s contained in the manuscripts of Jan van Leeuwen’s full treatises shows an evolution in the strategies the Groenendaal

⁴⁶ It was printed in 1663 in Bruges by Joannes Clouwet’s widow, and reprinted in 1665 in Antwerp, by Cornelis Woons (Axters 1943, p. LXVII–LXIX).

editors developed to spread and promote the authority of its lay brother. We may distinguish two levels on which this development took place, the first being the origin of his authority, and second the reason why he was to be considered an influential tutor. Going by the one surviving first edition prologue, Jan van Leeuwen is represented as a writer whose authority was derived from the fact that he was the honourable mystic Jan van Ruusbroec's cook. In the second edition, Van Leeuwen's background, lack of schooling, and lay status are mentioned, although not considered a disadvantage. Because Jan van Leeuwen received his authority directly from God – the ultimate *auctor* – his characteristics, which some might consider to have been lacking, only serve to stress the immense power of the gifts that the Holy Spirit bestowed upon him. The reasons as to why he should be seen as authoritative are already to some extent highlighted in the first edition: these include his exemplary behaviour, and his role as a tutor, which made him trustworthy in mystical matters. This was emphasised more still in the second edition, not only by drawing attention to Van Leeuwen's experiences, anecdotes, qualities, and to areas of the text in which he claims authority for himself, but also by explicitly defending those claims (in chapter titles, for instance).

During the editing and 'publishing' process of Jan van Leeuwen's *opera omnia*, we see the writer evolve from an exemplary Christian, a man of flesh and blood, to the constructed persona of 'the Cook'. Biographical elements that enabled the editors to turn him into an authority on mystical matters were selected, lifted out of the primary text, and brought to the fore. By doing so, they by-passed some of his other characteristics, such as his lay status, which might have prevented him from being raised from the status of writer to that of an author with *auctoritas* – to someone, in other words, worth reading and following.

WRITINGS

Second edition

First edition

- LONG PROLOGUE, MENTIONING COLLECTION OF 8 TEXTS AND 1 *ROLIE*
Dboec vanden x gheboden gods (*De decem praeceptis*; 1358)
- Van vier manieren van bedinghen ende ondersceet tusschen bidden beden ende aenbeden in tghemeyn (*De oratione*; 1371-1374?)
- Dboec vanden inval (*De inspiratione*)
- Die rolle vander woedegher minnen (*De ardenti amore Dei*; after 1355)
- SHORT PROLOGUE, MENTIONING COLLECTION OF 5 TEXTS
Vanden drien coninghen (*De tribus magis*; before 1352)
- Een ander wonderlic bouc van tienderhande materien tracterende (*De articulis*; 1352)
- Dit boec sal heten een ghetughe ende een ondersceyt ghevende tusschen godlec licht ende deemsterheyt ende oec tusschen natuerleke gheboorte ende overnatuerleke gheboorte [...] (*De differentia inter naturalem et supernaturalem generationem*; 1352-1353)
- Dit boec sal ons redene ende ondersceyt gheven tusschen die ghene die god gheroepen ende ewelec uutvercoren heeft [...] (*De electione divina*; between 1353 and 1355)
- Van vijfterhande bruederschap (*De quintuplici confraternitate*; before 1355)
- Dboec vanden x gheboden die god bi moyses den kinderen van isreal gaf (*Item scripsit et alium librum de praeceptis decalogi*; 1355)
- Dat ander boec vanden seven teeken der sonnen (*De septem signis Zodiaci spiritualiter expositis*; 1356)
- Terde boec – Hoe dat goet oerspronct overmids die drijheit gods uut eenre macht (*De origine omnium rerum*)
- Tvierde boec vanden ix choren der inghelen ende der ewegher glorien Ende hoe wi hem gheliken moghen (*De novem choris angelorum et cetera*; before 1352-1353)
- Dat vijfste boec van severderhande manieren van menschen die gode minnen dwelke gheset es op drijje state van levenne (*De septem generibus amatorum Dei*)
- Dat seste boec hoe dat men cristus leere verstaen ende volcomelijc na volghen sal ende dat in drie manieren (*De intelligentia et observantia doctrinae Christi*)
- Dat sevende boec hoe datmen alle ongherechtheit laten sal ende cristus roepe ghetrouwelijc na volghen met allen doechden tot in deweghe leven (*De desertione injustitiae et obedientia vocationis Christi*)
- Dat achtste boecxken wat dat een armen mensche van gheeste toe behoert (*De paupertate spiritus*)
- Dat neghenden boexken van meester eckaerts leere daer hi in doelde (*Contra errorem dogmatis magistri Eckardi*; before 1355)
- Dat tiende boec van enen inwendeghen verborghenen gheesteliken sacramenteliken etene daer ons Jhesus Cristus toe noet (*De spirituali manducatione corporis Christi*; before 1355?)
- Dat XIste boec van menegherande goeder leeringhen die seer orbelijc sijn (*De multiplicibus bonis et salutaribus documentis*)
- Dat XIIste boec beghinnende op die VIII salicheide (*De octo beatitudinibus*)
- Een rolle vanden richters ende onderscheet tusschen den gherechteghen ende ongherechteghen mensche (*De iudicibus et cetera*)

In: Ms. Brussels, RL, 667
and Ms. Brussels, RL, IV 401

In: Ms. Brussels, RL, 888-90

MANUSCRIPT TRADITION

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|--|-------------|------------|
| | 1400 (c.) | Ms. Brussels – RL, II 138 + Ms. Cape Town – SAB, Grey 3 c 4 (Written: supposedly in Groenendaal) | Fragmentary | ← |
| FIRST EDITION edition of 5 texts, around 1355 | 1425 (c.) | Ms. Deventer – SAB, I, 55 (Written: by a sister of Diepenveen) | 1 text | |
| | 1459 | Ms. Pommersfelden – Bibliothek Graf von Schönborn, 280/2881 (Written: by a lay brother of Rebendorf) | 5 texts | Precursor |
| SECOND EDITION edition of 9 texts (5+4), between 1355 and 1400 | 1460 (c.) | Ms. Brussels – RL, IV 401 (Written: possibly for John IV, count of Nassau († 1474)) | 9 texts | ← |
| | 1540 | Ms. Brussels – RL, 667 (Written: by Jan de Swettere, a lay brother of Herent) | 9 texts | |
| Possibly also part of SECOND EDITION | 1543 | Ms. Brussels – RL, 888-90 (Written: by Jan de Swettere, a lay brother of Herent) | 13 texts | Same texts |

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore the ways in which Jan van Leeuwen († 1378) – cook and writer of Middle Dutch mystical treatises, based at the priory of Groenendaal – was represented by the editors of his *opera omnia*. We do this by analysing the prologues, chapter titles, and *nota*’s in the manuscripts that contain his treatises in full. From the first edition – probably compiled during Van Leeuwen’s life – to the second – with textual witnesses from c. 1400 until c. 1550 – we discern several clear strategies that were used by the editors to signal to readers that Van Leeuwen’s writings were worthy of being collected, distributed and read as authoritative in mystical matters.

BETWEEN NORMS AND BOOKS. CONSTRUCTING AUTHORITY IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

1. *Introduction*

The fifteenth century was a period of great religious renewal and diversification – it was the century of the Councils of Constance and Basel, the foundation of many new universities north of the Alps, and the emergence of various religious communities and movements.¹ Described by John Van Engen as an era of ‘multiple options’, the fifteenth century encompasses developments in a wide variety of socio-political, religious, and philosophical fields.² It is exactly this diversity that makes the period just before the Reformation so fascinating, but at the same time difficult to ‘tame’ and describe. Never before had so many people actively taken part in the religious and academic life. The mobility of scholars, texts, and ideas – boosted by the introduction of the printing press in the latter half of the century – reached unprecedented levels. The exchange and interaction between the various actors of this quickly changing landscape became ever more complex. New ways of communicating and transmitting knowledge also meant that new antagonisms arose: schools and traditions of thought, which had been established

¹ The secondary literature on the fifteenth century is huge. What follows is only a small selection of works on religious, philosophical, and theological life in the Late Middle Ages: Roest 2009, Goudriaan 2009, Corbellini 2013, Gumbert 1990, Duffy 1992, Cesalli, Germann & Hoenen 2007, Van Engen 2008a, Bast 2004. For more information about the foundation of new universities in the fifteenth century, see also Meuthen 1988, p. 52 and Rüegg 1993.

² Van Engen 2008b.

in the previous centuries, referred to their authorities as banners to be carried high.

Inquiring into the nature of *auctoritas* in this period is only possible by acknowledging the polarity between the diverse settings of an intellectual world in ferment. The central question of this article is, therefore, how authority can be defined in the many-sided fifteenth century. In order to tackle this issue, a preliminary distinction will be made between *normative* and *physical* authority. The former refers to the authorities which are legitimated as norms and *ought* to be followed. In the fifteenth century the normative authority is identifiable with the doctrines of the Church, the schools of thought of the scholastic tradition (e.g. Thomism, Albertism, etc.), as well as with a canonised author or one who was recognised because of the wide circulation of his works (e.g. Jean Gerson). The second kind of authority is described as *physical*: in the Late Middle Ages authority basically travelled through textual sources, i.e. manuscripts or books produced in one of the early printing shops. The physical combining of the sources in a book, effected by including or omitting materials, is in itself a strategy to confer authority. There is undoubtedly a constant tension between normative and physical levels, making it impossible to define authority in absolute terms, but rather characterising it as a relational concept. What makes a text, an author, or a school of thought 'authoritative' will always depend on both the material transmission of sources and the dominant normative system of a certain historical context.

The composite nature of fifteenth-century textual sources augments the need to analyse them by means of an interdisciplinary approach. Their high grade of heterogeneity requires a collaborative effort of not only history and philosophy, but also philology, codicology, and bibliography. In what follows, we try to combine these disciplines and to apply the frame of normative/physical authority to three different contexts. This allows us to investigate how authority is shaped (and reshaped) in various social and intellectual circles during the fifteenth century. In particular, this contribution presents three case studies based on regional – but still relevant – late medieval figures: the Dominican friar Albert Löffler, the Franciscan Observant Hendrik

Herp, and the Carthusian Denis of Rijkel. In the first case study, the reader's attention is drawn to the arrangement of authoritative texts in scholastic manuscripts; the second deals with the 'deconstruction' of a text for a specific audience; and finally, the third examines the creation of authority in texts that deal with the indescribable divine realm.

The three case studies consider the concept of *auctoritas* in the fifteenth century from different perspectives, addressing various contexts in which the tension between normative and physical levels is, from time to time, demonstrated. The challenge of understanding the phenomenon of authority within this period is even more engaging: the issue is so multifaceted that it would be reductive to undertake it from a single point of view. At the end of the paper, it will become clear that (late medieval) authority is a relational concept that can only be understood in terms of the interactions between socio-intellectual groups, texts and ideas.

2. *Shaping and Manipulating Authority in the Latin Tradition: Albert Löffler and his Library*

According to the definition given by Jan Opsomer and Angela Ulacco, authority consists of the reliability that a group of individuals ascribes to someone with respect to a certain epistemic domain.³ By using such a definition, the authors stress a relational feature in the concept of *auctoritas*, which is universally valid. The relations between groups play a key-role in shaping authority: whatever historical period one looks at, the mechanisms of authority do not depend on the initiative of a single 'lawmaker', but rather on the interaction between social and intellectual entities.

In the late medieval culture, textual sources were the main depositary of authority, and the intellectual groups of the time transmitted them in manuscripts and (later on) in prints. Hence, the study of the main products of textual transmission becomes crucial for understanding the concept of authority in its relational dimension. The manuscript is the medium *par excellence*

³ See Opsomer-Ulacco in the present volume.

in the process of manipulation of a certain tradition: in the many manuscripts produced within universities and convents, scribes and commentators used texts to reiterate already established authorities or to confer new ones. Their choices were undeniably sensitive to the various schools of thought and intellectual traditions dominant during their time. Therefore, much more than a passive container of texts, the academic manuscript is a complex artefact influenced by the educational and epistemological models of its creators. Adjustments and corrections, cuts and additions, omissions and explanations are all textual strategies that scribes and compilers employed when creating a book. Analysing the strategies used in the manuscript's arrangement is, thus, an excellent way to closely observe the process of establishing, reiterating, or manipulating a certain authority.

In fact, a fifteenth-century manuscript is the protagonist of this first case study. The codex here described was copied and assembled by the Basel Dominican Albert Löffler: manuscript Basel, Universitätsbibliothek F VI 58 (henceforth MS G). The book can be defined as a *monogenetic composite*; that is to say a miscellany copied (in different steps) by the same scribe.⁴ The goal of the case study is to unravel how the authoritative textual sources were combined and transmitted. It will become clear that the manuscript reflects, also at a material level, two authoritative traditions (Albertism and Thomism), and readapts them according to Löffler and his brethren's needs.

Albert Löffler (Rheinfelden 1416 – Liebenau 1462) was a brilliant fifteenth-century copyist with a solid academic background. His life and education are traceable through the many notes he left on his forty-book library. After preparatory studies at the Ulm *Lateinschule*, he obtained a *baccalaureus artium* from Heidelberg University in 1439. Then, he undertook a clerical career and entered the *Ordo Praedicatorum Basiliensis*, becoming prior in 1455, and travelling between Basel and Worms as preaching

⁴ The definition of *monogenetic composite* was coined by J. P. Gumbert in his taxonomy of miscellaneous manuscripts; see, in particular, Gumbert 2004, p. 17–42. A standard source is the codicological vocabulary edited by Denis Muzerelle: Muzerelle 1985. On the definition of miscellany, see also Petrucci 2007.

reformer up to his death.⁵ Löffler’s collection represents the most substantial portion of the fifteenth-century Dominican library in Basel. Most of his manuscripts were Latin miscellanies containing standard texts of the academic and religious curricula.⁶

2.1. A Brief description of MS G: Albertist natural philosophy in the first two works

The year is 1449 and Löffler is building up a compendium for the use of his brethren in Basel. Most of the works collected in MS G were curricular texts present in both universities and religious orders.

| TEXT | FOLIA | DATE | |
|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Albertus de Orlamünde, <i>Summa naturalium</i> + glosses | 3 ^r – 128 ^r | Oct.? 1449– 22 Jan. 1450 | } <i>Production Unit</i> |
| Petrus Gerticz de Dresden, <i>Parvulus philosophiae naturalis</i> + commentary | 135 ^r – 232 ^r | 3 Jun. 1449 | |
| Thomas de Aquino, <i>De ente et essentia</i> + <i>Expositio</i> by Armandus de Bellovisu | 238 ^r – 286 ^v | 26 Nov. 1448– 3 Jan. 1449 | } <i>Production Unit</i> |
| Ps.–Thomas de Aquino, <i>De principio individuationis</i> | 287 ^r – 288 ^v | 1449 | |
| Ps.–Thomas de Aquino, <i>De sensu communi</i> | 288 ^v – 290 ^r | 1449 | |
| Thomas de Aquino, <i>De principiis naturae</i> | 290 ^v – 294 ^v | 1449 | |
| Thomas de Aquino, <i>De operationibus occultis naturae</i> | 294 ^v – 297 ^r | 1449 | |
| Thomas de Aquino, <i>De mixtione elementorum</i> | 297 ^r – 298 ^r | 1449 | |
| Thomas de Aquino, <i>De motu cordis</i> | 298 ^v – 300 ^r | 1449 | |
| Thomas de Aquino, <i>De iudiciis astrorum</i> | 300 ^{rv} | 7 Jan. 1449 | |
| Iohannes Garisdale (?), <i>De terminis naturalibus</i> | 301 ^r – 306 ^v | 1449 | |
| Notes on universals and transcendentals | 309 ^{rv} | 1450? | |
| Lesson on Petrus Hispanus’s <i>Summulae logicales</i> (fragm.) | 310 ^{rv} | 1450? | } <i>Production Unit</i> |
| Formula to be used during the disputations & <i>Protestatio</i> | 311 ^v | | |

TABLE 1: Albertus Löffler’s Cod. BASEL, *Universitätsbibliothek* F VI 58

⁵ For a more detailed biography of Albert Löffler, see: Schmidt 1919, p. 160–254; Lorenz 2013, p. 186–215; Signore 2015, p. 143–149. For the Ulm *Lateinschule*, see for example Bodemann & Dabrowski 2000, p. 11–47.

⁶ As to the late medieval Dominican library in Basel and the books compiled by Albert Löffler, see: Schmidt 1919; Scarpatetti 1977; Lohr 1994; Dolbeau 2011, p. 113–132.

On a codicological level, the genesis of MS G is quite simple.⁷ Chronologically, the first booklet Löffler copied corresponds to the collection of Thomistic (and pseudo-Thomistic) opuscula, completed in January 1449 (fol. 238^r–300^v): at the end of this ‘production unit’⁸ Löffler included a brief lexicon of natural philosophy terms (fol. 301^r–306^v). The other *libelli* of the manuscript – the *Parvulus philosophiae naturalis* (135^r–232^r) and the *Summa naturalium* (3^r–128^r) – were completed by Löffler in June 1449 and in early 1450, respectively, and placed at the beginning of the book. The last section of the manuscript, which must have been originally broader,⁹ consists of two short notes on the universals and on the ‘transcendentals’ (i.e. the properties of being); the fragment of a *lectura* on Peter of Spain’s *Summulae logicales*; and finally, a formula to be used during the disputations along with a *protestatio*. In the following pages, an overview of the texts will be presented, in the same order as their appearance in the manuscript.

The emphasis of the book is clearly on natural philosophy. In fact, the initial two works were popular schoolbooks during the fifteenth century, providing students with a compact summary of Aristotle and Albert the Great’s ideas on psychology and natural philosophy. The *Summa naturalium* (3^r–128^r) was composed by Albertus de Orlamünde, a thirteenth-century lector of the Dominican Order in Thuringia, who belonged

⁷ We are not sure whether Löffler was directly responsible for the binding of MS G. However, the codicological and philological analysis indicates that he certainly decided which texts to include and how to arrange them. Moreover, the binding of the manuscript is identical not only to other Löfflerian manuscripts, but also to other contemporary books of the Basel Dominican library (which present similar covers and pastedown leaves); and all of these books date back to the late 1440s. This means that Löffler at least supervised the arrangement of the *libelli*. For more details about the binding of Löffler’s manuscripts see Lorenz 2013, p. 206.

⁸ For the concept of ‘production unit’, intended as codices or parts of codices resulting from the same act of production, and for other descriptive features of late medieval manuscripts see P. Andrist, P. Canart, & M. Maniaci, *La syntaxe du codex. Essai de codicologie structurale*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2013 (Bibliologia, 34).

⁹ According to the *conspectus*, after the notes on universals and transcendentals (309^{rv}), the manuscript should have contained two other (anonymous) works: in fact, we read *Item de essentia universalis* and *Item distinciones Alpei*. Nevertheless, the folia in this part have been repaired and, thus, the original extension of the missing works can no longer be estimated.

to the school of Albert the Great.¹⁰ The *Summa* was indebted to the natural philosophy works of the *Doctor Universalis*, who has long been considered its author. The text is divided into five small treatises: the first three correspond to Aristotle's *Physics*, *De caelo et mundo*, and *De generatione et corruptione*; the last two are directly taken from Albert the Great, namely *De impressionibus aeris* and the *De potentiis animae*.¹¹ The success of this schoolbook was mainly due to its brevity, which made it affordable even for those students who were not able to purchase large quantities of paper. It is no coincidence that the work was known as *Philosophia pauperum*, i.e. philosophy for the poor.

The second work of the manuscript, the *Parvulus philosophiae naturalis* (135^r–232^r), also deals with natural philosophy. It contains definitional statements covering Aristotle's *Physics*, *De generatione et corruptione*, and *De anima*. The *Parvulus* has been attributed to Petrus Gerticz, a Dresden schoolmaster accused of Hussitism and burned alive at Regensburg sometime between 1421 and 1425.¹² In MS G, a long and dense commentary surrounds the *Parvulus*, analysing the work scrupulously, just like a standard academic commentary to be used during a lecture. Moreover, Löffler inserts a *glosa interlinearis* throughout the whole work, in which he explains difficult terms and concepts.¹³ As indicated by Martin Grabmann and later confirmed by Bernhard Geyer, the text stemmed from Orlamünde's *Summa*, or rather, was its summary.¹⁴ Thus, it comes as no surprise that the *Summa naturalium* and the *Parvulus* were often bound together and placed at the beginning of university and monastic curricular collections:

¹⁰ For Albertus de Orlamünde, see Grabmann 1918 and Lohr 1972, p. 345–348.

¹¹ The *De impressionibus aeris* and *De potentiis animae* are chapters of Albert the Great's *Meteororum* and *De anima*, respectively.

¹² For the life of Peter Gerticz of Dresden, see Boehmer 1915, p. 212–231; Lohr 1972, p. 352–355.

¹³ Interestingly, Löffler makes a clear distinction between the synonymic expressions (introduced by *id est*) and the conceptual explanations (introduced by a conventional sign). The same happens in many other Löfflerian manuscripts; cf., for example, the codex Basel, Universitätsbibliothek F VIII 16 in: Signore 2015, p. 155–156.

¹⁴ On the *Parvulus philosophiae naturalis* and its authorship (which is questioned by some scholars), see: Grabmann 1918; Geyer 1938; Lalla 2003, p. 77–88; and Mutlová 2010, p. 48–58.

both condensed natural philosophy into a single block and were ideal for students and young clerics wanting to browse through Aristotelian basics in the quickest (and cheapest) way possible.

Interestingly enough, Löffler and his contemporaries did not hesitate to include the *Parvulus* in their manuscripts, even though it had been authored by a condemned heretic. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the text circulated in a large number of copies (supposedly sixty), and the name of Gerticz was often mentioned.¹⁵ The inclusion of the *Parvulus* in MS G should not be disregarded: Löffler's main concern was the adherence of his miscellany to the Aristotelian-Albertist natural philosophy. Thus, the ratio of the collection was for him more important than the problematic authorship of the *Parvulus*.

2.2. Thomistic metaphysical opuscula in a natural philosophy book

Whilst the first two works of the manuscript are inclined to the Albertist school of thought, the following eight (fol. 238^r–306^v) refer to the Thomistic tradition. In fact, this group consists of Thomistic and pseudo-Thomistic opuscula. As is well known, the opuscula were, for the most part, short and early treatises written by Aquinas for teaching purposes; still today, they are considered a valuable source for understanding the foundations of Thomas's vocabulary and his original philosophical positions.¹⁶ The analysis of the transmission history in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century codices containing such works reveals certain recurrent clusters.

A particularly interesting group of opuscula, often transmitted together, is the following: *De ente et essentia*, *De principio individuationis*, *De sensu communi* and *De principiis naturae*. With the

¹⁵ Löffler writes (fol. 135^r): 'Sequitur tractatus qui dicitur Parvulus philosophie et ascribitur secundum quosdam magistro Petro Gerticz rectori scholarium in Dreseden'. For the manuscripts and the sixteenth-century printed editions (about twenty) containing the *Parvulus*, see Lohr 1972, p. 353–354; update in Lohr & Colomba 2010, p. 83–84.

¹⁶ Somewhat underestimated by Étienne Gilson, the Thomistic opuscula have been reevaluated mainly by John F. Wippel, who considers them as essential sources for understanding Thomas's original philosophical positions. See Wippel, 2000, p. xix.

exception of the spurious *De sensu communi*, the other three are traditionally referred to as a synthesis of Thomas's metaphysical positions.¹⁷ At first sight, finding a group of 'metaphysical' works inserted into a natural philosophy compendium appears quite unusual. Yet, Löffler's choice does not seem arbitrary: one should not forget that the interdependence between metaphysics and natural science was stressed by Thomas himself. William A. Wallace keenly explains the reasons for this relationship: 'for Aquinas, the existence of separated substance [...] alerts one to the fact that being is not necessarily material and so can be studied for the characteristics it shares as either material or immaterial'.¹⁸ In other words, it is precisely Aquinas's comprehension of the *scientia naturalis* that grounds his idea of being and, subsequently, the construction of his metaphysics. In many parts of his opera, Aquinas observed that if immaterial substances did not exist, then natural philosophy itself would be 'first philosophy'.¹⁹ In sum, natural philosophy is necessary to establish a subject for metaphysics and, as such, it can act as a propaedeutic tool. Even the initial chapters of the metaphysical opusculum *par excellance*, the *De ente*, are imbued with natural philosophy, which represents an unavoidable presupposition for the study on being.²⁰ Hence, the three 'metaphysical' opuscula (*De ente et essentia*, *De principio individuationis*, and *De principiis naturae*) seem to have been included by Löffler in his compen-

¹⁷ The *De sensu communi* is traditionally considered to be a spurious work. It has been attributed both to Thomas Aquinas and to Albert the Great, but there are no conclusive proofs that it was written by either one of them. For more information, see Grabmann 1931, p. 348–351. For the critical edition of the *De ente et essentia*, see Thomas Aquinas 1976, p. 315–381. The *De principio individuationis* is also spurious: it was very likely composed by Thomas Sutton, an early Thomist defending the thesis of the substantial form's unity (see edition in Thomas Aquinas 1927, p. 193–196). For the edition of the *De principiis naturae*, which focus on the Aristotelian Physics and Metaphysics, see Mandonnet 1927, p. 8–18.

¹⁸ See Wallace 1982, p. 10⁸.

¹⁹ Among other passages, cf. *In VI Meta., lect. I, 27*: '[...] dicens quod si non est aliqua alia substantia praeter eas quae consistunt secundum naturam, de quibus est physica, physica erit prima scientia'. In his contribution, Wallace collects several passages where Aquinas draws attention to the interdependence between metaphysics and natural philosophy (see Wallace 1982).

²⁰ See for example Lehrberger 1998, p. 829–847.

dium because they all share a common and introductive background of natural science. Löffler places the practical usefulness of the manuscript above the peculiarities of the works and traditions he brings together.

2.3 The protestatio at the end of the manuscript

As a manual of natural science, MS G was conceived for the use of young clerics in the context of a Dominican lecture. At the very last folium of the manuscript, Löffler makes reference to a *pater lector* and copies formulas to be used during a disputation and/or a lesson. The canonical formula at the bottom of the page is known as *protestatio*:

(fol. 311^v) Protestor ego quod non intendo in praesenti actu sive in quocumque alio per me dei gratia in posterum fiendo aliquid dicere, asserere seu pertinaciter defendere quod sit contra determinationem sacrosanctae Romanae ecclesiae, quod sit contra doctores sanctos ab ecclesia Dei approbatos, vel quod sit contra articulos Parisius et in aliis universitatibus condemnatos. Et si quid talium dixero vel ex lapsu linguae vel ex ignorantia, quae heu magna est in me, seu vi argumentorum, quod magis timeo, illud ex nunc prout ex tunc revoco, adnullo. Et peto quod habeatur pro non dicto submittens me correctioni vestrae, reverende Pater Lector, et omnium aliorum quorum interest taliter delinquentes corrigere et a veritate deviantes ad viam veritatis reducere. Qua protestatione praemissa sit haec in ordine conclusio mea prima.²¹

²¹ 'I hereby declare that I do not intend – in the present act or any other act I will accomplish in the future (by the grace of God) – to affirm, state or obstinately defend anything contradicting the determination of the Holy Roman Church, the holy Doctors approved by the Church, or anything opposing the articles condemned in Paris [i.e. *opposing the Condemnation of 1277*] and in other universities. And if I happened to say something similar, due to a speech error or simply out of ignorance – which is so great in me – or even due to the effectiveness of argumentative reasoning [*vi argumentorum*] – which I fear above all, I recant and revoke it now for then. And I ask that anything [wrong] I might have said, should be taken as never said, and I rely on your correction, reverend Pater Lector, as well as on anyone else interested in correcting those who, like me, are wrong and [interested in] bringing them back to truth. Considering the aforementioned oath, my first conclusion will follow.' Löffler's *protestatio* has been also quoted in Hoenen 2013, p. 36–37.

The *protestatio* is extant in many fifteenth-century *statuta* of theological faculties. By using this formula students and masters declared they would be ready to revoke anything that might be wrong or pernicious from their assertions. The oath, with roots in the Canon Law, granted a presupposition of unintentionality and non-pertinacity to its user. In fact, it averted the danger of contradicting or distorting ecclesiastical doctrine: an incumbent danger in an historical period facing great political and religious upheaval (Löffler himself, in the *explicit* to the *De ente* on fol. 286^v, stated: *anno scismatis, guerre et periculosissimi temporis*). Surprisingly enough, the friar Löffler decides to include this standard academic formula in his Dominican compendium, although the usage of such sworn statements in religious orders is scarcely attested.²² One might wonder whether the *protestatio* – besides being used in the oral context of a university lecture – might also be a strategy to ‘protect’ a manuscript. Is Löffler transmitting a formula to young students or is he trying to refer it to his own manuscript? A definitive answer to this question is impossible. However, including the text of a heretic like Gerticz in MS G could have been a valid reason for Löffler to have something to worry about.²³

In conclusion: when creating a natural philosophy textbook, the copyist Albert Löffler follows – whether deliberately or not –

²² Interestingly enough, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the history of the *protestationes fidei* meets the biographies of the great condemned authors of the Reformation. Such oaths are to be met in all as in the oral statements) of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus, especially in cases in which the danger of accusations by the Church was highly sensed: in his defense of Wycliffe’s *Liber de trinitate*, for example, Hus adopted a formula that is very similar to the one reported here by Löffler. It is difficult to determine whether Löffler had knowledge of the recent (and not particularly successful!) use of the *protestatio*; but, surely enough, he must have been aware of the value of this oath, given his attendance – as a professional copyist – at the Council of Basel. Thus, the inclusion of this formula, right at the end of a well-designed book such as MS G., should not be disregarded: the question about its presence would still be interesting even when one believes it was included by chance. On Hus’s *protestatio* and its similarity to Wycliffe’s, cf. Loserth 1884, p. 253–254.

²³ We cannot be absolutely sure whether Löffler was aware of Peter of Gerticz’s condemnation. But Löffler’s active participation in the Basel Council (where Hussitism and Hussite authors were an evergreen topic) as well as his preciseness towards the textual sources of his library would suggest that our compiler likely had some knowledge of Gerticz’s problematic biography.

an already established pattern. In order to avoid a mistaken understanding of Aristotle's basic concepts, he combines two important traditions: Albertism and Thomism. In doing so, the friar Löffler adopts the method of the so-called *via antiqua*, by following an approach to natural philosophy that was typical of the Dominican (Observant) convents of the time. This aspect appears even more relevant if one considers that Löffler, as a student, had been educated according to the principles of the *via moderna*: in fact, he had studied between 1436 and 1439 at the strongly 'nominalistic' University of Heidelberg.²⁴ There are not enough elements to evaluate if and how Löffler understood the complex dynamic between the two *viae*. However, what is certain is that he considered it appropriate to follow the dominant referential model of the *via antiqua* in a natural philosophy compendium, by harmonising Albertist and Thomistic traditions. Such an approach provided the young clerics of the Basel convent with the basics for further theological studies (especially of Thomistic theology).

The initial purpose of this case study was to unravel how authoritative textual sources were put together and transmitted in a fifteenth-century Latin manuscript. The presupposition was that the attentive study of a manuscript, as the main product of late medieval textuality, leads us to grasp the process of authority in its relational nature. For this reason, it has been useful to analyse the assemblage of a book as well as the transmission history of its sources.

But what does this analysis indicate with regard to the concept of authority? In a manuscript such as Löffler's, both categories of *physical* and *normative* authority are clearly identifiable. The first coincides with the particular selection of materials of MS G. Combining Albertist and Thomistic works is a strategy for conferring authority to a book of natural philosophy. When the selection is not merely based upon a casual availability of the texts, the arrangement of a manuscript can become a strategy

²⁴ Actually, in that same period the 'realistic' tendencies of the *via antiqua* began to permeate the University of Heidelberg too, thanks to figures like Johannes Wenck von Herrenberg. For a more detailed description of the interaction between *via antiqua* and *via moderna* at Heidelberg University in the second quarter of the fifteenth century as well as an essential bibliography about this issue, see Signore 2015, p. 145–146.

for authorisation. This does not obviously happen automatically or in accordance with precise rules. The copyist and/or compiler will always have a certain ‘combinatorial freedom’, like in the case of MS G, where Löffler includes philosophical Thomistic works in a manual of natural science. And yet, the result of the copyist’s assemblage does tell us a lot about his intellectual background, as well as about the authorities and the schools of thought he makes reference to.

With regard to normative authority, the *protestatio* in MS G is emblematic: the formula bans anything that *sit contra determinationem sacrosanctae Romanae ecclesiae, contra doctores sanctos ab ecclesia Dei approbatos, vel contra articulos Parisienses et in aliis universitatibus condemnatos*. In other words, the authority to be defended here is ultimately the Catholic doctrine, as established by theologians or other normative figures accepted by the Church. This doctrinal kind of authority transcends the single *auctoritates* (of Aristotle, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas...) and stands as unsurpassable depositary of truth.

As already mentioned in the introduction of the article, physical and normative features interact with each other, confirming the relational character ascribed to the process of authorisation in the fifteenth century. The peculiar physical organisation of the sources in a manuscript can be a strategy for reinforcing an old authority or building up a ‘new’ (i.e. transformed) one. But these old or new authorities ought to be, in any case, compared and tested with the solid, normative ones. In this dynamic, the compiler can have some leeway even when he deals with the seemingly immutable Catholic doctrine. Löffler, for example, decides not only how to arrange the manuscript and which traditions to combine; but can go so far as to include a ‘problematic’ work into a canonical Dominican manual. Thus, while collecting authorities, the copyist is also clearly manipulating and transforming them.

3. *Bilingual authorship and authority: the case of Hendrik Herp*

The following case-study is concerned with the perception, construction and deconstruction of an author’s authority in the transmission of his Latin and, mainly, his vernacular work.

In the late Middle Ages, authors started to employ both Latin and the vernacular, with famous examples such as the theologian and chancellor of the Paris University, Jean Gerson (1363–1429), who wrote in Latin for his colleagues of the learned world, and in French for lay-persons.²⁵ The choice of a language implies the choice of a specific readership. How was the authorship and normative authority of ‘bilingual’ authors perceived – if at all – by readers and producers of their Latin and vernacular works? And did the physical level of authority correspond with the author’s normative authority? Did readers and producers participate in a construction of the author’s authority or did they use his texts in a way that suited their needs, disregarding authority?

To reflect on these questions concerning the way actors in the vernacular and Latin domains dealt with authority, the following paragraphs focus on the distribution of the work of an up until now less studied author, who must have been a well-known figure in his own time: the Franciscan Observant Hendrik Herp (c. 1410–1477). Herp earned his fame not only as a successful leader (*vicarius provincialis*) of the Franciscan Observant province of Cologne between 1470 and 1473, but also as the author of a corpus of sermons and mystical treatises copied in a large number of manuscripts and printed in many editions, both during and beyond his lifetime. As an author and as a public figure and administrative leader, Herp moved both in Latin and vernacular ‘spheres’, which, as we shall see, in the fifteenth century were by no means strictly separated worlds, but rather overlapping and interacting circles of authors and readers, constantly engaged in the (re)shaping of textual material and thus themselves establishing and ‘deconstructing’ authority.

Analysing the extant manuscripts and copies of printed editions of Herp’s work, we can describe how the physical aspects of his authority were shaped alongside the development of his authority on a normative level. Because the case study is concerned both with Latin and vernacular codices, it is possible

²⁵ The most recent study on Gerson is the work by Daniel Hobbins: see Hobbins 2009 and his earlier article from 2003. Earlier examples of bilingual authors are Marquard von Lindau († 1392), Henricus Suso (1295–1366) and Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–before 1328).

to indicate differences between the way normative authority influenced material aspects in Latinate and vernacular circles.

3.1. Latin and vernacular editions of Herp's work

In the first half of the 1470s, the Mainz printer and ex-business partner of Johannes Gutenberg, Peter Schoeffer, published two books written by an author from the Low Countries: Hendrik Herp. It was the first time both texts saw the light of day in a printed edition. The first book discussed here was published on 10 September 1474. Written in the language of the *literati*, the tome contains a large collection of 212 sermons on the Ten Commandments.²⁶ The scale of the book and the attention paid to the accessibility of the text – the text was printed on a large folio format and the edition contains more than 400 leaves and comprehensive alphabetical indexes – points to the importance that was attached to the publication. Furthermore, the first sermon is preceded by an introductory rubric:

Incipit Speculum aureum decem praeceptorum dei fratris Henrici Herp, ordinis minorum de observantia, per modum sermonum ad instructionem tam confessorum quam praedicatorum. Et primo de multiplicitate et diversitate legum. Sermo primus.²⁷

This rubric provides a good starting point for the exploration of the material level of Herp's authority. It presents a number of important details concerning the work and its author: the reader learns that the volume is entitled *Speculum aureum decem praeceptorum Dei*, and that the collection of sermons is directed

²⁶ A fully digitized copy kept in the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek in Darmstadt is available via the following link: <http://tudigit.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/show/inc-v-12>. Consulted copy: Leiden, University Library, shelf mark 1369 B 12. Subsequent editions of the *Speculum aureum decem praeceptorum Dei*, also known under the title *Speculum aureum de praeceptis divinae legis*, were published in 1481 in Nürnberg by Anton Koberger, in 1496 in Basel by Johannes Froben and in 1520 in Straßburg by Johann Knoblauch. Possibly two more editions were printed, in Nürnberg in 1478 and in Straßburg in 1486, but no extant copies are known. See Freienhagen-Baumgardt 1998, p. 15. On Peter Schoeffer and his printing shop see for example Hellinga 1994 and König 2000.

²⁷ Hendrik Herp, *Speculum aureum decem praeceptorum Dei*, Leiden, University Library, shelf mark 1369 B 12, fol. 12r.

at preachers and father confessors alike.²⁸ The author is a friar called Hendrik Herp, who is a member of the Franciscan order, more specifically of the Franciscan Observance, the fifteenth-century reform movement within the Franciscan order.²⁹ In the colophon of the edition the information about the author is confirmed by a reiteration of these facts.³⁰

Considering the question of (bilingual) authorship and *auctoritas* – how the authorship and authority of ‘bilingual’ authors was perceived and what the link was between language and normative and physical authority – it is telling that the printer included these details about the author in a prominent place in the edition. Peter Schoeffer would not have included the information about Herp if he thought it would be meaningless to the buyers, or worse, if it could have harmed the reputation of the volume, which would mean his business would lose income and his investment might not even be recouped. Instead, it can be assumed that the presentation of the author was thought to be a recommendation of the book to (potential) buyers.

These material aspects seem to underline an already existing normative authority. Contemporaries would have, for example, immediately understood the significance of Herp’s adherence to the Franciscan Observance: by 1474, the year in which the volume was published, the Franciscan Observance had gained significantly in influence in the North-western regions of Europe. Its popularity increased through the reformation of existing friaries, the foundation of new monasteries, and the formation of Franciscan Observant provinces, functioning separately from the (Conventual) Franciscans.³¹ The author of the *Speculum aureum* would not have been a stranger to pastors

²⁸ See Freienhagen-Baumgardt 1998, p. 9–10. See also Dlabáčová & Prochowski 2013, cat. nr. 3.1.

²⁹ On the Franciscan Observance in general see Roest 2009, and more specifically on the Low Countries see Dlabáčová 2014 and Roest 2005.

³⁰ Hendrik Herp, *Speculum aureum decem praeceptorum Dei*, Leiden, University Library, shelf mark 1369 B 12, fol. 406^r: *Speculi aurei decem praeceptorum dei fratris Henrici Herp, ordinis minorum de observantia, opus preclarum in nobili urbe Maguntia quam imprimendi arte ingegniosa [...]*.

³¹ The introduction of the Franciscan Observance in the Low Countries is discussed in Schaap 2005 and 2008. See also Dlabáčová 2014, in particular p. 37–43 and p. 118–123. For a discussion of events in the North-western German regions see the recent study of Daniel Stracke: Stracke 2013.

familiar with the movement: from 1470 to 1473 Herp was the administrative leader of the Franciscan Observance in the Cologne province, making him responsible for the practices in the Observant friaries and the quality of pastoral care provided by the friars within the province. The year before his sermon collection was published in Mainz, Herp left the office of provincial vicar to return to his duties as guardian of the Franciscan Observant friary in Mechelen, which he had fulfilled from 1454 on with short breaks. It was in Mechelen that he died, four years after he had left the highest administrative office, in 1477.³² Herp's adherence to the Franciscan Observance and his position within the movement invested him with (normative) authority, and made him an interesting author to publish for Schoeffer.

Schoeffer's edition of Herp's *Speculum aureum* is interesting for several reasons: by the time Herp's work reached Schoeffer's workshop and was disseminated in large-scale, high quality volumes (at least part of the print run was produced on parchment)³³ through the new medium, Herp had just left the office of provincial vicar which he had filled successfully for the last three years. This would have given him certain fame. Furthermore, in the Low Countries, Herp's home region, the printing press at that time was only in its infancy.³⁴ The very fact that Herp's work was printed gave authority to his authorship, and in turn, this physical authority would have emphasized the normative level of his authority. Even if a reader – in this case probably a member of the clergy – was not yet acquainted with Herp and his *autoritas*, he would have been made familiar with his name and background through Schoeffer's edition, and impressed by the very size of the edition. These factors would have undoubtedly expanded Herp's reputation.

³² On Herp's biography see Dlabáčová 2014, p. 27–55; Dlabáčová 2008; Verschuere 1931a.

³³ The copy held in Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek (shelf mark inc v 12) is made of parchment, while the copy held in Leiden University Library (shelf mark 1369 B 12) was produced on paper. Further research is needed to establish the exact proportion of copies printed on paper and copies produced on parchment. Nowadays there are still 85 extant copies of Schoeffer's 1474 edition. See Dlabáčová & Prochowski 2013, cat. nr. 3.1.

³⁴ The year 1473 marks the introduction of the printing press in the Low Countries, see e.g. Lemaire 1973.

However, the Latin sermon collection was not Herp's only book published in Mainz in or before 1474. Possibly in the very same year he published the *Speculum aureum*, Schoeffer decided to bring a printed edition of Herp's only work written in the vernacular onto the market: the *Spieghel der volcomenheit* (Mirror of Perfection), a guide to the mystical ascent for both lay and religious readers.³⁵ Schoeffer did not print the original Middle Dutch text, but a version in Rhenish-Franconian. In contrast to the *Speculum aureum*, the *Spieghel*-edition was a much more modest project, printed on a quarto format and on paper only. In connection with the question of bilingual authorship and the interplay between normative and physical authority, the fact that the name of the author and his background in the Franciscan Observance was not mentioned in the edition of the vernacular text is noteworthy – only the title of the work is given above the text on the first page: *Hie begynnet der Spiegel der volnkommenheit* (Here starts the Mirror of Perfection).³⁶

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact meaning of the discrepancy in the presentation of the author between Schoeffer's editions of the *Speculum aureum* and the *Spieghel*. Does the discrepancy imply that an author's normative *auctoritas* was not (automatically or easily) transferred from the Latin to the vernacular context and that the notion of *auctoritas* functioned differently amongst readers of vernacular texts? Might the difference be explained through the different nature of the texts, i.e. pastoral vs. mystical? Or was Schoeffer simply not aware of the fact that Herp was the author of the *Spieghel der volcomenheit*?³⁷

³⁵ The Rhenish-Franconian *Spieghel*-edition is dated *ante 10. sept. 1474* by Léonide Mees, see Mees 1974, p. 77. The dating is discussed in Freienhagen-Baumgardt 1998, p. 119. Cf. Herp 1931, vol. 1, p. 97–98. [Hendrik Herp], *Spiegel der volnkommenheit*. [Mainz: Peter Schoeffer, before 10 September 1474]. Consulted copy: München, BSB: 4° Inc. s.a. 1691 (digital version available through 12-bsb00034347-3).

³⁶ [Hendrik Herp], *Spiegel der volnkommenheit*, fol. 2^r.

³⁷ Cf. Freienhagen-Baumgardt 1998, p. 20: 'Waren die Predigten in einigen Klöstern des oberdeutschen Raums vertreten, so wird in den mittelalterlichen Bibliothekskatalogen Herp nirgends im Zusammenhang mit seinen mystischen Schriften erwähnt, obwohl gerade diese die Rezeption Herps bis in die Neuzeit begründet haben. Dies kann wohl zum einen damit erklärt werden, daß viele Bibliothekskataloge verloren gegangen sind, zum anderen wird beispielsweise der *Spieghel* in den oberdeutschen Handschriften weitgehend anonym überliefert.'

3.2. The physical level of authority in Latinate circles

A look at the transmission of Herp's vernacular text in manuscript can provide further indications as to how the established differences between the two Mainz editions could be interpreted in terms of physical authority. Within the Middle Dutch transmission of the *Spiegel* – the complete text is contained in twelve extant manuscripts and fourteen manuscripts contain part(s) of text – the vast majority of manuscripts do not inform its reader(s) about the identity of the author. Only two manuscripts contain Herp's name and they both belong to a group of four *Spiegel*-manuscripts which are known to originate in, or to have belonged to, a male religious community. The majority of *Spiegel*-manuscripts were produced in a female religious community or for female (religious) readers.³⁸

In the first of the two manuscripts that mention Herp's name, it was the librarian of the Carthusian monastery in Amsterdam who added Herp's name to the codex.³⁹ In fact, only one single scribe who copied the actual text of the *Spiegel* mentions Herp's name, and he does so at the very end of the codex after explicitly announcing the end of the text: *Hier eyndet dat spiegel der volcomenheit. Opusculum fratris Henrici Erp*.⁴⁰ In light of the question of bilingual authority, it is striking that here we are dealing with a male scribe – a priest who also copied many Latin manuscripts and wrote for a male audience. It is also intriguing that he wrote the sentence indicating Herp's authorship in Latin.

The fact that Herp's name is mentioned only in these two manuscripts seems to confirm that Herp's authorship was well-known, or attributed more value to, amongst readers also familiar

³⁸ Dlabáčová 2014, p. 18. The four manuscripts are: Weert, Gemeentemuseum: CMW 39, written by Jan de Test van Emmerick at the male Tertiaries of Saint Michael and Saint Bartholomew in Maastricht; Amsterdam, UB: I G 40, copied at the Alexians or Cellites of Saint Alexis in Kampen; Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek: M.ch.o. 32, which belonged to the library of the Carthusian monastery in Amsterdam and later to the Carthusians of Tüchelhausen near Würzburg, and Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek: 15228, again from a Carthusian monastery, this time Roermond.

³⁹ Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek: M.ch.o. 32. The owner's mark is written on fol. 1^v. See Obbema 1996 and Dlabáčová 2014, p. 107ff.

⁴⁰ Herp 1931, vol. 2, p. 421. MS Weert, Gemeentemuseum: CMW 39, fol. 137^v.

with his Latin work. In other words, Herp's normative authority was far greater in these circles and therefore owners and copyists were more inclined to support his authority by, for example, mentioning his name. It is probable that the Carthusians in Amsterdam could count some of Herp's Latin treatises and sermons amongst their library possessions, as was for example the case in the Windesheim monastery of Rebdorf, where Herp is mentioned explicitly as the author of the *Speculum aureum decem praeceptorum Dei* in the fifteenth-century library catalogue: *Henricus Herpp, ordinis minorum, theologus ac iurisperitus*.⁴¹ According to Germanist Kristina Freienhagen-Baumgardt, Herp is called *iurisperitus* because of his elaborate discussion of Canon Law in his sermons.⁴² His status as an expert in this area is reflected in his interference in a juridical matter concerning the friary of Herentals, which Herp founded during his provincial vicariate. When in 1474 Herp was resolving problems around the foundation at the request of and on the authority of the provincial vicar at that time – Henricus de Bercha – he consulted theologians from several faculties on the matter.⁴³ His decision to do so provides a further indication of Herp's acquaintances and the range of his normative authority.

Having studied himself, probably at Leuven, Herp moved in learned circles, and his Latinate audience appreciated his authority on theological matters, especially concerning pastoral care, in which he had a lifelong experience.⁴⁴ His many Latin mystical works, sermons and his reputation might have aroused their interest in his vernacular work, initially written for a lay

⁴¹ The full scale of the library of the Amsterdam Carthusians is difficult to establish. See Meinsma 1903, p. 249–251 and Obbema 1996, p. 212–213 on its contents. The Rebdorf monastery also owned a copy of Schoeffer's printed edition of the *Spiegel der volcomenheit*. See Freienhagen-Baumgardt 1998, p. 19. Dlabáčová 2014, p. 193. Ruf 1933, p. 33.

⁴² Freienhagen-Baumgardt 1998, p. 19.

⁴³ [...] *diversarum tamen facultatum diversi doctores privilegiorum nostrum circumstantiarumque rei et facti debita prehabita informatione maxime cuiusdam instrumenti publici desuper confecti* [...]. De Troeyer 1973, p. 41–42. Herp's letter is now kept in Leuven, KADOC [Katholiek documentatie- en onderzoekscentrum], *Archief van de Vlaamse Minderbroedersprovincie Sint-Jozef*, BE/942855/1649, dossier nr. 340. See also Dlabáčová 2014, p. 54–55.

⁴⁴ On the possibility that Herp was academically educated, see e.g. Dlabáčová 2014, p. 29 and De Troeyer 1974, p. 108.

woman, but by no means restricted to lay readers in its execution and distribution. The Latin marginalia in the *Spiegel*-manuscript from the Carthusian monastery in Roermond, summarizing the contents, numbering lists, and sometimes providing a translation of the Dutch text, are possibly the first signs of a deep interest of Latinate readers – aware of Herp’s normative authority – in the vernacular text.⁴⁵ The marginalia in the Roermond manuscript can be seen as a precursor of what was to come. Around the turn of the century, between 1496 and 1504, the *Spiegel* was translated into Latin by the Cologne Carthusian Petrus Blomevenna.⁴⁶ In the first half of the sixteenth century another Carthusian residing at the Cologne monastery, Dirk Loer, collected Herp’s mystical work, including the *Spiegel*, and had it published in 1538 under the title *Theologia Mystica*.⁴⁷ Both Blomevenna and Loer were aware of Herp’s authorship of the *Spiegel* and they participated in a construction of his authority: Blomevenna through the very fact that he translated the text into Latin and through his introduction in which he elaborates on Herp and his authorship; Loer through the creation of an anthology of Herp’s mystical work.

For several reasons, it remains difficult to interpret the differences in the Mainz editions of Herp’s vernacular *Spiegel* and his Latin *Speculum aureum* – we do, for example, not know for sure whether Schoeffer knew Herp was the author of the *Spiegel*. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern a clear pattern within the manuscript-transmission of the *Spiegel*: Herp’s authorship was better known in Latinate circles and in connection to his Latin work; and/or it was felt more important in these circles to impose Herp’s authority on the vernacular text by explicitly mentioning his name. Together with his track record as an administrative leader and spiritual author, this allows for a conclusion that Herp was – certainly in the (Latin) world of his fellow friars – an authority.

⁴⁵ Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek: 15228. Marginalia can for example be found on fol. 111^v, 112^v, 113^r, 122^r, 125^r, 129^v, 131^v, 132^r, 132^v, 133^{r-v}, 134^{r-v}, 135^{r-v}, and 136^r–138^r.

⁴⁶ Herp 1931, vol. 1, p. 131–132.

⁴⁷ Herp 1931, vol. 1, p. 99–102. Freienhagen-Baumgardt 1998, p. 32–33. De Troeyer 1974, p. 112.

3.3. A manuscript for Leiden tertiaries

The conclusion that Herp's authority was better proliferated in circles of Latinate readers makes observing what happens in a manuscript from a female tertiary convent in Leiden – where the friars of the Franciscan Observance were responsible for the *cura animarum* – an intriguing case to conclude the discussion of bilingual authorship in connection to normative and physical authority in the fifteenth century. The manuscript is one of the *Spiegel*-manuscripts from a female oriented environment, serving as a representative for the use of the text – and thus the shaping of Herp's authority – in manuscripts from a similar (vernacular) context. The compilation techniques used in the manuscript do not concern the construction of a (male) authority as one might possibly expect, but rather the conscious 'deconstruction' or at least change of the phenomenon. The manuscript, in use in the Leiden tertiary convent of St Clare in the latter quarter of the fifteenth century, was composed around the same time the convent was founded, between 1470 and 1480.⁴⁸ It is therefore very likely that the collection of vernacular spiritual literature contained in the codex was specifically collected for the Leiden tertiaries. The responsibility of the Franciscan Observant friars for all practical pastoral care and spiritual wellbeing of the sisters, made the friars directly involved in the control of the reading material that came into the hands of the women who lived in the convent of St Clare.⁴⁹

In all, the manuscript contains a well-considered collection of vernacular spiritual texts. On two occasions parts of Herp's *Spiegel* were integrated into the syllabus. The collection opens with the first part of the *Spiegel*, the *XII Stervinghen* ('Twelve ways to die').⁵⁰ The name of the author is not mentioned

⁴⁸ Obbema 1996, p. 64, nr. 21. The manuscript can be consulted digitally via the following link: https://socrates.leidenuniv.nl/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=2942221. On the history of the convent see Schoengen 1941, v. 1, p. 131 and Van Luijk 2003, p. 20.

⁴⁹ The manuscript and its connection to the Franciscan Observance are discussed in Dlabáčová 2014, p. 136–144.

⁵⁰ Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek: LTK 340, fol. 1^r–27^r. For the sake of clarity, Herp wrote about the renunciation process (*sterven*, spiritual dying) in the first part of the *Spiegel*, separately from actual mystical ascension (union).

in the manuscript. The text is only announced with a rubric containing the title of Herp's texts – *Hier beghint die Spiegel der volcomenheit* (Here starts the Mirror of Perfection).⁵¹ This part of the *Spiegel* describes the process of stripping the soul of all worldly matters (*sterven*, spiritual dying), which Herp, for the sake of clarity, discussed separately from actual mystical ascension (union). The text actually continues past the end of the first part of the *Spiegel* through to the prologue introducing the second, main part of the text discussing the mystical ascent in a threefold way: the active, contemplative and super-essential contemplative life.⁵² The part of the prologue copied into the manuscript contains Herp's announcements about what he is going to discuss in the main part of his work; for example, a description of the process of unification between God and the human soul.⁵³

However, the main part of his work was not included in the manuscript. Instead, other texts were brought together in the codex and in a way these texts realized the announcements made by Herp in the prologue to (the second part of) his *Spiegel*. The manner in which the texts compiled in the manuscript are presented to the reader, with no or only very brief rubrics, makes this assumption even more plausible.⁵⁴ Most of these texts are aimed at a female audience and include the allegorical *Vander dochtere van Syon*, examples about female religious communities taken from the *Vitae patrum* and the *Dialogus miraculorum* by Caesarius of Heisterbach, a text on temptation, explanations of the celebration of Mass, and a teaching on the usefulness of silence.⁵⁵ All texts culminate in the concluding piece, Bo-

⁵¹ Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek: LTK 340, fol. 1^r.

⁵² Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek: LTK 340, fol. 27^r–27^v.

⁵³ The following part of the prologue can be found in the Leiden manuscript: Herp 1931, vol. 2, p. 91–95, line 32. Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek: LTK 340, fol. 27^r–27^v.

⁵⁴ The first text copied after the first part of Herp's *Spiegel* and his partial prologue to the three ways of life is not announced with a rubric, but does start with an initial: Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek: LTK 340, fol. 27^v. The next text, an exemplum from the *Vitae patrum*, is announced *Een exempel*, which does not necessarily make clear to the reader that he/she is now going to read a different text: Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek: LTK 340, fol. 33^r.

⁵⁵ Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek: LTK 340, fol. 27^v–149^r.

naventure's *Vitis mystica* in Middle Dutch, ascribed to Bernard of Clairvaux, which is by far the longest text in the manuscript.⁵⁶

The second 'selection' from Herp's *Spiegel* is incorporated in the part of the spiritual syllabus leading up to *Vitis mystica*. The two chapters are taken from the part on contemplative life and focus on *ghelatenheit* (equanimity) – accepting the abandonment by God and subsequent feelings of a loss of mercy and consolation.⁵⁷ In the manuscript, the text starts without any announcement at all. A number of changes have been made to incorporate the text into the syllabus and cover up the fact that it had been taken from a larger work. Firstly, at the beginning of the first chapter a sentence referring to the fourth grade in the process in the contemplative life described by Herp is left out. The compiler of the manuscript was primarily interested in the six reasons why God abandons a person, and therefore he/she changed the start of the second sentence from announcing 'many a reason', to explicitly announcing 'six reasons'.⁵⁸

The way in which Herp's text is used in the Leiden manuscript partially changed its function – and thus the knowledge it communicated. Through its physical incorporation within this specific and pragmatically oriented collection of texts, Herp's text became more practical and female oriented.⁵⁹ Since the convent was under the pastoral care of members of the Franciscan Observance, we encounter a change in the author's normative *auctoritas*, in this case Herp, through the physical form

⁵⁶ Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek: LTK 340, fol. 149^r–277^v.

⁵⁷ Leiden, UB: LTK 340, fol. 83^v–90^r. It concerns chapters 47 (*Vanden vierden graet deser opclimmghe ende van ses saken der ghelatenheit*) and 48 (*Hoe die ontrouwe vrienden hon toenen inder ghelatenheit in vijf manieren*). Herp 1931, vol. 2, p. 285–301.

⁵⁸ Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek: LTK 340, fol. 83^v. The sentence *Hier is dan ten iersten te weten, dat die sake waerom God enen mensche ontrecket die bevoelike gracie, devocie ende minne is menigherhande*, starts more generally in the manuscript, but ends more specifically, focusing on the six matters to be discussed: *Het is te weten, dat die sake waerom dat God enen mensche ontrekt die bevoelike gracie, devocie ende mynne is sesrehande*. Furthermore, a reference in the second chapter to a previous passage in the *Spiegel*, discussing the case of brother Rogier, is omitted: Herp 1931, vol. 2, p. 301, line 134.

⁵⁹ On books as pragmatic instruments in religious (self)reformation and reading as a pragmatic activity directed primarily at exercising virtues within the context of the *Devotio Moderna*, see Staubach 1991.

of the manuscript and from within the reform movement the author himself belonged to. Although the friars of the Franciscan Observance must have been aware that the *Spiegel* was written by one of the most renowned leaders of the Franciscan Observant movement at that time, they did not hesitate to use the text in their own way. They only used the parts they thought useful, made changes in the actual text, and combined Herp's work with other texts they thought better suited for the specific context.

The Leiden manuscript and the way Herp's work is presented to the reader stands in stark contrast to the 1474 Mainz edition of his *Speculum aureum*: rather than being elaborately presented in a costly volume underlining the author's normative authority, Herp's name is left unmentioned and his text is cut and inserted into a collection of texts. A manuscript or a printed edition could thus either underpin Herp's normative authority or diminish it by not activating its potency through a mention of the author and his achievements. This depended on the book's form and its contents, on the way materials were presented, which in turn varied according to the context in which the book was conceived: intellectuals in a Latinate context seem to have been more sensitive to and more readily aware of the normative authority of a fifteenth-century writer than readers and scribes working for or consuming texts in an environment that was predominantly vernacular.

Apparently the Leiden friars did not feel the necessity to impose Herp's normative authority – which they must have been aware of –, on the female audience, possibly because it would have no meaning to the tertiaries. It is not only the text which is deconstructed and (re)constructed, something similar happens with Herp's authority. The construction and organization of the Leiden manuscript is a manifestation of a pattern more often seen within the transmission of vernacular spiritual literature in miscellanies: parts of texts are combined at the discretion of compilers, readers or patrons. The pattern implies a possible deconstruction of an established, normative *auctoritas* and the manipulation of his work in form and content through processes of selection, adaptation and compilation with other texts.

The material discussed in this case study shows that Herp's bilingual authorship did not grant him a bilingual authority *per se*. A study of other late medieval bilingual authors can shed further light on the notion of authority in Latin and vernacular realms and on the interaction between normative and physical authority when it comes to the perception of bilingual authorship and authority.

4. *Authorizing the indescribable*

The differentiation between a normative and a physical approach to authority necessitates a closer look at the specific content preserved in manuscripts and prints. The content of a text exposes an author's inner thoughts and also reflects his approach to a normative discourse, i.e. in one way or the other the author relates to the normative debates, beliefs, and knowledge of his time. As such, the content stands at the border between the physically perceivable text in a codex and the author's interaction with the normative ideas surrounding him. However, if we relate this observation to the question of authority (i.e. what it is and how it is shaped), the specific character of the content becomes a pivotal argument.

The normative relation between content and authority is traceable in Barry Smith's definition of *auctoritas*. According to him it is someone who is respected and believed and whose texts deserve to be read and contain 'profound sayings worthy of imitation.'⁶⁰ The text written by an authority has a special standing as it promises high quality and a content worthy of imitation. In the case of philosophical texts, this means that the writings of an authority must not only contain profound sayings, but should also relate to truth. After all, it is difficult to think of an authority within philosophy whose writings are judged by the majority to be untrue. Once it has been proven that an author has produced writings that do not contain true sayings (independent of the question of what exactly is considered to be true), his work loses authority and becomes, at best, a museum piece in the history of ideas.

⁶⁰ Smith 1991, p. 4.

Alongside philosophical texts, mystical writings provide a special case study with regard to the relation between physical reproduction, content, and a normative level. Mystical literature is highly dependent on theological and philosophical discourses and shares with them a common interest in the divine realm. One will find in mystical literature texts that show the ‘correct’ path to truth and, in addition, presumably true sayings directly received from *the* truth: i.e. God.⁶¹ In this regard it is interesting to analyse how the authority of mystical writings was established considering that its content was related to the highest normative level thinkable. The main problem with answering this question is the very nature of the mystical experience and the path towards it. Many authors considered the divine realm to be something that actually cannot be described sufficiently in rational terms: the truth revealed was eventually transferable, but the final part of the path towards a mystical union with God and the experience itself seemed to exceed all intellectual abilities. The real question at stake is therefore how the authority of a late medieval mystical text was shaped while taking into account that the author wrote about the highest normative level thinkable: a supernatural divine realm transcending a human being’s natural understanding.

Especially suitable for such an inquiry are mystical texts dealing with supernatural wisdom: the very source of supernatural wisdom is God, the utmost normative authority. These texts are not only interesting because supernatural wisdom is divinely inspired and therefore automatically true and authorized, but also for various other reasons. Texts treating supernatural wisdom can include the wisdom itself, descriptions of what it is, and how

⁶¹ A recurring topic in the Late Middle Ages was the question of whether it is possible to get into contact with God during one’s lifetime. Such contact could involve a union with God and receiving supernatural wisdom, revelations, and prophecies. The union with God is a central topic especially within the mystical literature. For standard introductions to mystical literature, see the volumes of Ruh 1990–1999 and McGinn 1991–2005. Topics like the knowledge of God as well as contact with the divine realm also have a long and complex history within philosophy and theology. Most of the scholastics have at least touched upon the topic. A thorough analysis of the *visio beatifica* has been written by Trottmann 1995. See also Emery 1996b and, in particular for scholastic debates within the fifteenth century, Hoenen 1995b.

it could be reached. In addition, some of these texts contain a self-reflection of the author, in which he ponders upon his own access to supernatural wisdom and his competence to describe it. The author's personal perspective intimately determines his writing process: if supernatural wisdom is not accessible intellectually, it follows that any text containing a description of such wisdom fails to present it accurately in rational terms. The difficulty of writing about the divine realm has consequences for the authority of mystical writings. The authoritative status of a mystical text is in jeopardy the moment the intellectual access to the divine is considered to be impossible or limited. However, a potential readership still needs to know why it is useful to invest time in a text that describes the indescribable and whether it is compiled out of profound sayings worthy of imitation. We will see that various strategies were applied to establish the *auctoritas* of mystical writings.

4.1. Denis the Carthusian on supernatural wisdom

In the late Middle Ages members of the clergy (amongst them scholastic philosophers and theologians) and laypeople alike were interested in contact with the divine realm and the acquisition of supernatural wisdom. Generally, clerics dealt with these topics in Latin, whereas laypeople read mostly mystical literature written in a vernacular language. Several authors tried to break down the barriers between the languages and different readerships. Sometimes they used scholastic knowledge in texts for laypeople or they allowed mystical literature to influence their scholastic thinking. Particularly interesting in the fifteenth century was Denis the Carthusian (1402–1471) who had a broad knowledge about the various literary and scholarly reflections upon the divine realm. His *De contemplatione* (written between 1440 and 1445) in particular echoes the opinions of his contemporaries about supernatural wisdom.⁶²

Denis initiates his considerations with a definition of *natural* wisdom that is acquired and philosophic. Such wisdom involves

⁶² For more information on Denys the Carthusian, see Beer 1963, Emery 1990, 1992, 1996a, 1988, and Wassermann 1996.

the knowledge of the immaterial, intellectual, and eternal natures insofar as they can be known on the basis of the course, nature, and order of created things. However, natural wisdom does not lead to a supernatural beatitude, which requires faith and *supernatural* wisdom. Subsequently, Denis focuses on *sapientia supernaturalis* and distinguishes two sub-categories: *scholastic* and *infused* wisdom. Scholastic wisdom can be achieved through human effort; it can be taught and has been described in both Testaments. Here divine revelation functions as a starting point for further scrutiny and, therefore, scholastic wisdom does no more than refer to it. The second kind of supernatural wisdom on the other hand is a gift of grace and presupposes mercy: it is directly infused from above by the Holy Spirit; due to it the human mind is able to discern, appreciate, and truly judge God and divine things. This is done not only through true knowledge and an intuition of reason, but also by means of affect. It is a *scientia sapida* – a wise knowledge. Finally, Denis understands contemplation as an act, which is ascribed to this kind of supernatural wisdom.⁶³

The distinction between scholastic and infused wisdom characterizes dissimilar paths on how to deal with supernatural wisdom and it also points at diverse intellectual traditions in the fifteenth century: for example, within the late medieval universities (e.g. Albertists and Thomists in Cologne)⁶⁴ or the commen-

⁶³ Denis the Carthusian 1912, I, a. 2. For an English translation see Ní Riain 2005.

⁶⁴ At the university in Cologne the students and teachers of the *bursa laurentiana* (with its authority Albert the Great) and the *bursa montana* (Thomas Aquinas) dealt with what Denis called ‘scholastic wisdom’. One of the fierce debates between the two schools especially concerned the intellect’s dependence on *phantasmata* in this life, whereas the intellect’s general importance with regard to knowledge of God was not at stake. According to both schools, the intellect was the highest faculty of the soul and the main instrument to acquire knowledge about God. The Thomists wrote several schoolbooks for their students in the *bursa montana*. In *Expositio circa tres libros De anima Aristotelis* (Cologne 1498) one will find on fol. 71^r one of the *quaestiones* dealing with the issue at stake: ‘Queritur utrum intellectus noster non separatus a magnitudine posset substantias separatas intelligere.’ Also the positions of the Albertists can be found in their schoolbooks. In chapter 5 of *In epitomata totius naturalis philosophie* (Cologne 1496) dealing with the third book of *De anima*, they have summarized the five stages of the intellect’s development that precedes contact with the divine realm. The difference between them was the way in which they

tators of Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita's *De mystica theologia* (c. first or fifth–sixth centuries).⁶⁵ Amongst the several intellectual traditions of the fifteenth century, various debates are traceable that deal with supernatural wisdom and with the several ways to reach the divine realm. Especially intriguing is the following dispute in the monastic context of Southern Germany, which exemplifies how distinct the approaches to the divine realm could be.

4.2. Intellect vs. affect:

Reactions to Hugo de Balma's *quaestio unica*

In the middle of the fifteenth century, Nicholas of Cues (Cusanus, 1401–1464) – at that time already well-known for his *De docta ignorantia* (1440)⁶⁶ – was fiercely attacked for his views on the correct path towards a mystical experience. The debate evolved around the *quaestio unica* by the Carthusian Hugo de Balma (thirteenth–fourteenth century) who commented on *De mystica theologia* of Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita.⁶⁷ In his treatise *Theologia mystica (Viae sion lugent)* Hugo developed a particular perspective on the limitations of the human intellect's role in the contemplation of God.⁶⁸ He believed that the soul could

regarded the intellect's role in this contact. Thomas Aquinas and his followers described the mystical union of St. Paul (*raptus Pauli*) as the intellect's rapture from the rest of the soul and from any kind of sensory input deriving from the perceptible, material world: the intellect's abstraction from the *phantasmata* was, according to them, a necessary requirement for Paul's union with God. The Albertists highlighted the perfection of the human intellect as a prerequisite. They described how the human soul and its highest faculty, the intellect, could be developed in such a way that some were able to get into contact with the heavenly intelligences and receive divine knowledge. For more information about the debates between the two schools, see Hoenen 1993 and 1995a.

⁶⁵ For an overview about the different schools of thought with regard to late medieval mysticism, see Haas 1995.

⁶⁶ On Nicholas of Cues, see Beierwaltes 1988, Flasch 1998, Haubst 1991, and Hoye 2004.

⁶⁷ Other commentators were Bernhard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), Thomas Gallus Vercellensis (d. c. 1246), Richard of St.-Victor (d. 1224), Hugo of St.-Victor (1096–1141), and St. Bonaventure (1221–1215 July 1274). Also the theologians Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas dealt with *De mystica theologia*. A good overview on this commentary tradition can be found in Ruh 1996, p. 64–76, 85–90, 92–105, 113–126, 140–148.

⁶⁸ The Latin text and its French translation made by F. Ruello can be found in Hugo de Balma 1996. A German translation was provided by Walach 1994;

be moved in its *affectus* to God without any of the intellect's cogitation leading the way or keeping it company. His doctrine can be considered exemplary for an anti-intellectualistic and affective approach to contemplation.⁶⁹

Already in his prologue Hugo heavily criticizes the clerics who had distanced themselves from true wisdom and were only concerned with *scientia creata*. According to Hugo, true wisdom is rather the *mystica theologia* described by Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita. It can only be learned by those souls leaving behind human curiosity and willing to go beyond useless knowledge, proofs, and opinions.⁷⁰ At the end of his treatise Hugo formulated the so-called *quaestio unica*:

‘To bring into the open the truth of the hidden and mystical matters already discussed, a difficult question is posed, a question through which the truth of this wisdom will shine forth most clearly to anyone with understanding. We ask whether the soul in her *affectus* can, by aspiration, or yearning, be moved to God without any of the intellect's cogitation leading the way or keeping her company.’⁷¹

Hugo juxtaposes the *modus scholasticus et communis* to the second, mystical and secret path, the *modus mysticus et secretus*, which is based on the highest power of the soul, i.e. the *affectus*. Quoting Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita, Hugo understands unitive wisdom (*sapientia unitiva*) as ‘the utterly divine knowledge of God known through ignorance, according to the union that is above the human spirit’. Such knowledge is only achieved when (and again he refers to Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita) ‘[...] we are commanded to abandon all sense perception and sense-perceptible things, all

Martin 1997 published an English translation. For a summary of Hugo's *Theologia mystica*, see the introductions to the several editions and Ruh 1996, p. 91–105.

⁶⁹ The supposed anti-intellectualism of Hugo de Balma is discussed in Ruh 1996, p. 64, 67, 93.

⁷⁰ Hugo de Balma 1996, 126–128.

⁷¹ Martin 1997, p. 155. ‘Ad manifestandam illorum occultorum et mysticorum, quae dicta sunt, veritatem, quaeritur difficilis quaestio, in qua cuilibet intelligenti veritas huius sapientiae manifestius elucescit. Et quaeritur utrum scilicet anima, secundum suum adfectum, possit aspirando vel desiderando moveri in Deum, sine aliqua cogitatione intellectus praevia vel concomitante.’ Hugo de Balma 1996, p. 182 (1).

intelligible and non-intelligible things'. Without any preceding investigation or meditation such mystical wisdom carries the lover's *affectus* towards God. According to Hugo, mystical theology alone is the wisdom of the Christians and no human being 'ever will be able to apprehend by rational investigation or intellectual effort this wisdom found in the supreme *affectus*, far beyond the faculties of the human mind.' The soul can reach God due to its affect and without any preceding or concomitant intellectual activity.⁷²

Apparently, Hugo's answer to his own question was not satisfactory. In 1452, the Benedictine abbot from Tegernsee, Kaspar Aindorffer, turned to Cusanus with Hugo de Balma's *quaestio unica* and asked him 'whether the soul can reach God directly without any cognition of the intellect or without preceding or concomitant cogitation, only through the affect or the point of the mind, the so called *synderesis*'. Confronted with the *quaestio unica* and well aware of its history, Cusanus argued that some knowledge necessarily had to precede the mystical union because the completely unknown can neither be loved nor found. A union without any preceding knowledge is therefore not acceptable. The position of Cusanus displeased especially the Carthusian Vinzenz von Aggsbach who defended the position of Hugo de Balma. The result was a long lasting, agitated exchange of letters.⁷³

The debate shows that even in the fifteenth century the *quaestio unica* of the Carthusian Hugo de Balma caused a lot of commotion. Several years before the quarrel, Denis the Carthusian also had dealt with the tricky question and stressed, like his friend Cusanus, the importance of the intellect with regard to contemplation and the acquisition of true wisdom. Denis dedicated a whole section to the *quaestio unica* in the third book

⁷² 'Patet ergo evidenter quod anima vere amans potest consurgere in Deum per adfectum accensum amoris desiderio, sine aliqua cogitatione praevia.' Hugo de Balma 1996, p. 204, 210–216, 232 (22, 27, 30, 32, 33, 35, 49); Martin 1997, p. 161, 164–165, 170. Hugo refers to *De mystica theologia* and to chapter 7 of *De divinis Nominibus* of Dionysius Aeropagita.

⁷³ For more information on the debate, see Treusch 2011, p. 138–198; Ruh 1996, p. 101–103; Emery 1988, p. 105; Haas 2004, p. 270–272. Vansteenberghe 1915, p. 109–110 has published an edition of Aindorffer's letter. See also Leclercq 1957 on monastic culture and theology.

of his *De contemplatione* (written between 1440 and 1445) and argued against Hugo's radically affective position.⁷⁴

Denis reports that Hugo understood mystical theology and the movement towards God by means of fervent love as the unitive wisdom Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita spoke of. However, Denis points out that the same Dionysius defined such wisdom as divine knowledge and that it can be found in the intellective power. Therefore, 'in the upward movement of mystic theology, the summit of the affective powers [*apex affectivae*] will not be carried towards God without the previous knowledge of the intellect; especially that which pertains to mystic theology'. Only the intellectual working that deals with creation needs to be abandoned; the *operatio intellectualis* with regard to the uncreated object must never be relinquished. Understanding and seeing mystically (*mystice videre*) are tasks of the intellect and not of the will. In addition, the working of the intellect does not stop during periods of mystical ecstasy. Once caught in such ecstasy, the human soul will be forgetful of itself and all other things. The soul will be carried to 'the super-substantial radiance of divine darkness', and even in this 'incomprehensible darkness of the eternal light' a working of the intellect, namely contemplation (defined as an act dealing with supernatural wisdom), vision or cognition, can be found. However, Dionysius's description of mystical wisdom in *De mystica theologia* as irrational, mindless, and foolish (*irrationalis, amens, stulta*) is problematic. Hugo used the authoritative description of mystical wisdom to underline that mystical experience is not based on any rational investigation. Denis, on the other hand, offers a different reading: Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita did not understand contemplation to be without any mental cognition when he called it 'irrational, mindless, and foolish'; it is only deprived of natural knowledge.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Denis the Carthusian rephrases the *quaestio unica* as follows: 'An vis affectiva seu apex affectus, videlicet voluntatis, possit adspirando vel desiderando ferri seu moveri afficque in Deum absque omni cognitione intellectus praevia vel concomitante.' Denis the Carthusian 1912, III, a. 15. See also Emery 1988, p. 129 and 1992, p. 329, 334.

⁷⁵ Denis the Carthusian 1912, III, a. 15; Ní Riain 2005, p. 174–175.

The position of Denis can be summarized as follows: contemplation is an act of the intellect; the working of the intellect leads to mystical wisdom and union if it is accompanied by love; knowledge of created objects needs to be transcended. This obviously contradicts the position of Hugo who rejected even a preceding or concomitant role of the intellect. At the same time, it shows the proximity between the contemporaries Denis and Cusanus.⁷⁶ They did not overemphasize either the intellect's or the affects' role in contemplation, since both were important in the mystical process.

4.3. Strategies to shape the authority of mystical writings

Once an author wrote about the supernatural realm, he had to convince his readers of his capacity to have true insights which, in addition, were in accordance with the established normative authorities (e.g. the Bible, the Church, *auctoritates* within theology and philosophy like Augustine, Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita or Saint Thomas Aquinas). However, describing the indescribable, supernatural, divine realm led to a severe problem. As long as the way towards the divine sphere with its true, mystical wisdom is accompanied by the activity of the intellect, it should be possible to describe rationally what happens and what this wisdom entails. However, following the position that the last stage of unification is an indescribable realm with irrational, mindless, and foolish mystical wisdom that transcends human understanding presented the author with a particular dilemma. Despite the indescribability of the supernatural, the author had to convince his readers that his mystical writings possessed profound and true sayings. The moment the credibility of a mystical text was at stake, the attribution of authority was also in danger. In many cases even the representatives of the Church had difficulties in making judgements about the mystical union undergone by a nun or about the supposed truth revealed. The documentation of such supernatural experiences necessitated also the development of strategies that would guarantee the content of mystical writings. The strategies regarded the

⁷⁶ Emery 1988, p. 106.

genuineness of mystical experience and the path towards it. Typical reproaches were to argue that a person claiming to be in contact with the divine was insane or had been misled by the devil and, as a consequence, the acquired wisdom was deceiving.⁷⁷ Proving that the mystical experience described in a text was true and did not have a diabolic source was without any doubt imperative. Likewise, texts explaining the path towards the mystical experience had to be in accordance with the normative teachings of the Church.

Jean Gerson (1363–1429), the chancellor of the University of Paris (from 1395) and a leading conciliarist at the council of Constance, dealt with the various mystical teachings and the tension between the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* in many works. He was also one of those late medieval figures who tried to give laypeople, especially women, access to contemplation by providing, for example, vernacular texts.⁷⁸ Among his abundant writings is the treatise *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis* (1402) which includes Gerson's thoughts about the distinction between true and false visions, between the 'genuine coin of divine revelations' and the 'counterfeit coin of diabolical trickery'.⁷⁹ In the treatise he states that with regard to this differentiation, general rules cannot be given and, moreover, that he considers revelations primarily to be a matter of faith and not of knowledge. However, he also reports experiences with false prophets (e.g. men believing they will become future popes) and shows the necessity to recognize the signs of true revelations. The incredible things that were written down reached him via reliable witnesses. He further comments: 'If we immediately deny everything or ridicule the matter or accuse the person,

⁷⁷ Hendrik Herp, like many others, wrote repeatedly about the devil or *viant* (enemy) and his temptations: Herp 1931, p. 53, 57, 71, 87, 91, 103, 159, 315, 377, 379, 381.

⁷⁸ For an overview about Gerson see the preface (by Bernard McGinn) and the introduction in McGuire 1998, p. xiii–xvi, 1–73, and Ryan 1998. Like Denis and Cusanus also Gerson reacted to the *quaestio unica* in his *De mystica theologia*. For the Latin edition see Combes 1958. McGuire 1998, p. 262–287, translated *De mystica theologia* into English.

⁷⁹ McGuire notes that the treatise is based on a lecture Gerson gave in 1401. The treatise is preserved in a letter to his brother Nicolas. McGuire 1998, p. 334, 455–456.

we will seem to weaken the authority of divine revelation, which is just as powerful now as it once was.' Yet, not everybody is qualified to be a witness. The person investigating the 'spiritual coin' should be a theologian trained by education and experience, and by concretely naming such an expert, he was perhaps referring to himself as a reliable authority with regard to mystical matters.⁸⁰ At the end of the treatise, Gerson summarizes the signs of genuine divine revelations:

'It must be seen whether it has the weight of humility without the vanity of curiosity and pride; if it contains the flexibility of discretion without superstitious stubbornness and lack of receptivity to advice; if it manifests the durability of patience in adversity, without any compliant or false imitation; if it shows the form of truth without mendacity or any undue attachment; if it has the bright and sincere colour of divine love without the contamination or filth of carnality.'⁸¹

In sum, he does not emphasize only the authority of the witness, but also the virtue and credibility of the person experiencing the mystical realm. Next to humility, discretion, patience, truth, and divine love, Gerson gives various examples that show: the necessity to recognize the falsehood of diabolic speech, insanity (i.e. due to excessive fasting), untrue revelations (i.e. by taking into account four requirements for a true revelation) or lack of obedience towards the Church.⁸²

The Church also plays a fundamental role in the next example. The authorization *par excellence* was probably the canonisation of an author, such was the case in 1323 with the *doctor sanctus* Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). In the process preceding his canonisation, it was important to prove, amongst other things, that he had experienced some kind of contact with the divine through a heavenly vision. According to Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, epideictic rhetoric had been used to establish the picture of an extraordinarily modest man who received divine inspiration. However, visions or miracles – requirements for the

⁸⁰ McGuire 1998, p. 334–337.

⁸¹ McGuire 1998, p. 363.

⁸² McGuire 1998, p. 339, 345–346, 349.

canonization – were not sufficient since, in fact, they could be brought about by Satan.⁸³ Another crucial aspect was the virtue of morals and, as a consequence, many witnesses were asked not only to testify to his miraculous signs, but also to his moral and religious life-style.⁸⁴ The case of the *doctor sanctus* confirms Gerson's genuine signs for true revelation: reliable witnesses not only had to approve the divine experience as such, but also the virtue of the mystic. With regard to the persons investigating the mystical experience, the Church was undoubtedly *the* authoritative instance to decide upon Thomas Aquinas' sanctity.

Hendrik Herp, a highly educated man, a pastor and well-integrated into the elitist world of the clerics, was certainly someone who Gerson would have considered a reliable witness. Like Gerson, Herp's particular profession positioned him between a layman and a genuine cleric. He wrote a vernacular mystical handbook, thereby giving laypeople access to knowledge about the divine realm. In the *Mirror* he describes what a human soul must do to be prepared for a mystical union with God, and he reflects upon his own role in writing about the path towards the super-essential contemplative life. He cannot describe what it means to experience the mystical union; rather, he is only able to show the entrance to the super-essential contemplative life. But what the soul receives is something he prefers to be explained by those who have understood it in an experiential way and who have been drawn – together with Paul – into the third heaven. Yet, while referring to the essential vision of St. Paul, it becomes clear that even Paul was unable to describe adequately what he had experienced.⁸⁵

⁸³ Also Gerson was concerned with this problem and, quoting Gregory the Great (*Dialogi de vita et miraculis patrum Italicorum*, 1.1), remarked the following about the status of miracles: „Gregory adds as a rule that miraculous deeds and humility are two signs that are sufficient to show the sanctity of a person. Miracles in themselves are not enough, since God's just judgement permits the evil to perform them for the sake of the church. The mind that is filled with the divine spirit, says Gregory, has its own signs as the clearest evidence of its condition, and these are truth and humility. If both these meet in one mind, then it is apparent that they bear testimony to the presence of the Holy Spirit.' McGuire 1998, p. 342.

⁸⁴ See O'Rourke Boyle 1997 and Gerulaitis 1967, p. 28, 31, 38.

⁸⁵ Herp 1931, p. 421.

The example of Herp shows that not only the union itself remains in the dark, but also the final part of the path towards that very same experience. Both are limited with regard to their descriptiveness. Although Herp clearly stated that he was not among those who had been able to enter the super-essential, contemplative life, it is notable that he was nevertheless seen as an authority for mystical matters. Still today we can find in the *Verfasserlexikon* the remarkable comment that Herp was capable of combining his *vita activa* with intensive mystical experiences. Therefore, clerics and laypeople committed themselves to his guidance.⁸⁶ Also the Carthusian Petrus Blomevenna (1466–1536) tried to establish the authority of Herp in his Latin translation of the *Mirror* entitled *Directorium contemplativorum*.⁸⁷ Blomevenna added an introduction to the translation in which he reports the testimony of two of his *confessores*, both of whom had been students of Herp. The two *patres* apparently had told him miraculous things about Herp, or the *vir doctissimus* as Blomevenna calls him. Sometimes Herp used to stay for up to five or six hours in the mass, and even his clothes were totally drained with sweat. Only when he sensed that the devil tried to deceive him, he dismissed this unique habit.⁸⁸

In his introduction, Blomevenna does not only call witnesses for the especially virtuous and religious personality of Herp, but also tries to protect his *Mirror* from misinterpretations. Blomevenna defines Herp's way of speaking as *hyperbolic* and refers to authoritative writings (e.g. Bible, Church fathers) where such language can also be found. According to Blomevenna, Herp did not intend to discuss Christian doctrines. Instead, he used the hyperbolic way of speaking to write about 'the deep secrets the contemplating soul receives'. Apart from that, it had been testified by Augustine and other *doctores* that Moses, St. Paul, and the *beata dei genitrix Maria* had seen God in this life due to a *raptus*. By quoting authorities and explaining the

⁸⁶ Troeyer 1981, p. 1128.

⁸⁷ Verschueren 1931b, p. 131–135. For Blomevenna's biography, writings, and about his role in the publication of Denis the Carthusian's *opera omnia*, see Hogg 1991, p. 173–181.

⁸⁸ Blomevenna 1931, p. 15.

intention of the author, Blomevenna establishes the authority of Herp and safeguards him from severe theological problems.⁸⁹ This was extremely important, since misinterpretations could lead to accusations of heresy and condemnations – a result opposite to that of an authorized text.⁹⁰

Once Blomevenna had established the author Herp as an *auctoritas*, his authority in turn carried the examples of mystical experiences in the *Spiegel*. Blomevenna now emphasizes physically visible signs, placing himself in the role of witness. He reports to have seen almost daily the miraculous, external changes of some of his brothers. These were changes which he would not have believed to be true if he had not seen them with his own eyes. Similarly, in the legend of Catherine of Siena one can find descriptions of such bodily changes.⁹¹ Also, Herp describes visible transformations of persons who have reached a high level of contemplation: an abbess not eating, drinking, feeling her body, interacting or having any perception of the things around her for thirty days; too excessive, immoderate prayer causing the heart to jump in the body or even the blood around the heart to boil; a monk reaching a point in his contemplation where he could not keep in his memory any earthly images or what others asked him to do; a loss of control over bodily movements because the soul is inflicted with exhaustive emotions, etc.⁹²

In addition to reliable witnesses, virtue, and physical signs, the extraordinary knowledge of the divinely inspired men and women could also be emphasized. Denis, for example, argued that the mystical insights of the Dutch mystic Ruusbroec (1293–1381) were true because he did not have much education and nevertheless, ‘he was able to say so many true things about the

⁸⁹ Blomevenna 1931, p. 3, 5, 7.

⁹⁰ At the end of the sixteenth century the *Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition* put the *Theologia mystica* (Herp’s *opera omnia* containing Blomevenna’s Latin translation of the *Mirror*) on the index of prohibited books. The Dominican Petrus Paulus Philippus corrected it and, for example, changed the *vita contemplativa superessentialis* into a *vita contemplativa supereminens*. The corrections were summarized in the *Index expurgatorius* (1596) by Parisian Carthusians. Verschueren 1931b, p. 114, 135–137.

⁹¹ Blomevenna 1931, p. 7.

⁹² Herp 1931, p. 211–213, 251, 289, 309–311, 329.

divine'. Denis saw this as a proof of Ruusbroec's inspiration by the Holy Spirit and the validity of his teachings.⁹³

Inherent to texts about the divine realm is the problem that human capacity to have true insights worthy of imitation might be limited. As the case study has shown, opinions about intellectual limitations varied. Those who allowed the intellect to play a role with regard to the contemplation of God had the necessary instrument to describe and to make judgements on revealed wisdom. As soon as the human intellect was considered to be transcended, one can trace back in mystical literature some of the abovementioned strategies to account for the authority of all kinds of phenomenon caused by the divine realm. They demanded reliable witnesses, emphasized the particularly virtuous personality of a mystic, or referred to other well-established authorities. Authors writing about mystical matters documented also physical signs and extraordinary knowledge as a result of divine inspiration. Once the authority had been established in accordance with the normative authorities (Bible, Church, Church fathers, etc.), the author became a part of the normative discourse and the following dynamics: his mystical writings could be used in debates and the reproduction on a physical level was now permissible and secure.

5. Conclusion

Shaping authority was by no means a closely regulated process, but was rather characterized by flexibility: fifteenth-century intellectuals dealt with *auctoritates* according to their own inter-

⁹³ Hoenen 2008, p. 372. The Holy Spirit was not only the source for directly infused wisdom, but could also be used as a guarantor for the importance of a book. In the prologue of an anonymous Middle High German commentary to Herp's *Mirror*, one will find the statement that the Holy Spirit wants you to read, enjoy, and understand the *Mirror*. It is remarkable that one way in which the anonymous author justifies the truth and importance of the *Mirror* is by referring to the Holy Spirit: in the first place, it is the divine realm and not a human readership that authorizes the *Mirror*. The passage referred to can be found in Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, cod. III. 1. 4° 24, fol. 10^{r-v}. The title of the treatise used in secondary literature is *Von den Kräften der Seele und den geistlichen Lebensformen*. For more information, see Ruh 1978, Freienhagen-Baumgardt 1998 p. 98–105, as well as Abram & Dlabáčová 2015.

pretations of specific normative conditions. Authors participated in a variety of institutions; their texts circulated and were read in different intellectual circles, each with their particular needs. Reactions to external norms were reflected physically in the texts preserved in codices. At the same time, the material reproduction and the various ways of dealing with texts influenced the interpretation of an authority, its reception, and even the normative level itself. The result is an almost endless variation of strategies for shaping authority. The tension between the normative and physical aspects and the application of these strategies is exemplified in the work (and its transmission) of figures such as Albert Löffler, Hendrik Herp, or Denis the Carthusian.

Löffler's Latin manuscript, addressed to the young clerics of the Basel Dominican convent, provides an answer to the question of shaping authority in the fifteenth century. In this case, the particular physical organisation of the sources results in a strategy to reinforce an old authority or to slightly transform it. Albertist and Thomistic sources, which Löffler combines to confer authority to his natural philosophy compendium, ought to be, in the end, compared and tested with the normative authority of the Church and the sacred doctrine. Interestingly, the copyist and compiler Löffler can have some leeway in adjusting the sources to his own (and his convent's) needs: in this light, he does not only reconfirm already existing authorities, but also reconstructs and transforms them.

The case of Hendrik Herp, an author who wrote in Latin and in the Dutch vernacular, shows a difference in the interplay between normative and physical aspects in both language realms. On the one hand, codices that were meant for (or used by) readers who also read Herp's Latin works seem to have physically underpinned his authority on a normative level. On the other hand, books meant for an audience who only read the Dutch vernacular deconstructed Herp's authority on a physical level, by cutting and changing his text and thus adapting it for pragmatic use in the context of a religious community.

Mystical wisdom, taken as irrational, mindless, and foolish, seemed to transcend all human understanding. Even though Denis the Carthusian was convinced that the intellect has a previous or concomitant role in the contemplation of God, other reactions to the *quaestio unica* exemplify how different

the convictions were with regard to the intellectual accessibility of the indescribable, divine realm. Whether it concerned supernatural wisdom, mystical experiences, or the path towards the divine realm, the supposed limited intellectual capacities demanded specific strategies to construct authority. These strategies ensured that, with regard to normative conditions, copying and reading mystical texts was safe.

As long as we focus on one author or codex, no general valid definition of authority in the fifteenth century is possible. The very nature of *auctoritas* has rather to be understood as a relational concept that implies a tension between a normative and a physical level: between contradictory traditions of thought, powerful institutions, authors, and textual transmission. Each of the three case studies describes this tension from a singular perspective, but, when brought together, they portray an on-going process of shaping authority. We were able to observe that, despite the strong normative powers engaged in the creation of an authority, *auctoritates* were never immune from further changes: they were confirmed, deconstructed, manipulated, put in doubt, misunderstood, defended, or even neglected. The combination of our case studies brought to light several aspects of this continuous dynamic.

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Abstract

The fifteenth century was a period of great religious variety, characterised by unprecedented levels of literacy and education as well as the production of an enormous quantity of texts dealing with an age-long heritage of authorities. This article approaches the question of how *auctoritas* can be defined in the fifteenth century by distinguishing between normative and physical authority. This theoretical frame is applied to three case studies focusing on various authors from the Rhineland and the Low Countries. The reader is presented with strategies to reinforce an old authority (or transform it into a new one) within the Latin textual tradition; the (de)construction of authority in the transmission of Latin and vernacular texts written by a single author; and finally, strategies to create authority in the case of works dealing with the indescribable divine realm. Each of the three case studies describes the tension between normative and physical authority from a singular perspective, but, when brought together, they expose an on-going process of shaping authority in the fifteenth century.

PATRICIA D. MENESES*

ANTONIO MANETTI'S BRUNELLESCHI: AN ATTEMPT AT ESTABLISHING ARTISTIC AUTHORITY

The *Life of Filippo Brunelleschi* by Antonio Manetti constitutes one of the most important resources for the study of architecture and artistic literature in the Renaissance. It was the first long biography dedicated to an artist and in the original manuscript of the text was preceded by a *novella*, *The Fat Woodcarver*, which featured the Florentine architect as one of the main characters. Much has been written about the *Life's* reliability as a primary source, its literary origins and authorship. Little has been done, however, to explain Manetti's motivations in constructing a heroic and authoritative image for Brunelleschi more than forty years after the architect's death, and to evaluate the effectiveness of this image. This paper seeks to investigate Manetti's motivations regarding his choice of this specific artist and his attempt to create his artistic authority through literary means.

Antonio di Tuccio Manetti (1423–1497) was a rather particular character in the history of artistic literature. Unlike most Renaissance writers on art, he was neither an artist, nor a patron, nor did he have the background of a humanist, having no education in Latin or Greek.¹ The son of a merchant, however, he not only wrote one of the earliest examples of modern artistic

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¹ Cf. the excellent entry by Giuliano Tanturli on *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. Tanturli 2007, available on [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-manetti_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-manetti_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

literature, but also established a model that would be followed for the next four centuries: the artist biography.

Before Manetti, it was not common to dedicate an entire text solely to an architect. Famous artists were sometimes included as characters in comic *novelle*, as in the case of Giotto in Bocaccio's *Decameron*. In this context, the *Life of Brunelleschi* represents a complete novelty. Even though the *Life* was not a finished work – the text ends abruptly while the author discusses the construction of the church of Santo Spirito in Florence – its form and structure had a great influence on other art theorists of the Renaissance.

The *novella* that precedes the biography, even though it belongs to a more traditional genre, has an important function in supporting the *Life*. As it is known from the manuscripts, it describes the prank (*beffa*) that Brunelleschi and his friends pulled on the woodcarver Manetto Ammanattini, known as Grasso. The joke consisted in convincing him that he was no longer himself, but had transformed into someone called Matteo, and was so successful that it turned the woodcarvers' life completely upside down. This narrative paid tribute to the traditional literature that dealt with artists, but also justified the inclusion of a biography, by supposing that the reader would want to know more about the brilliant man who accomplished such a feat.

In this paper the focus will be on the *Life* as a means of establishing artistic and cultural authority. But before discussing Manetti's intentions in writing a long biography of Filippo Brunelleschi, it is useful to present a brief description of the manuscript tradition of the text.

1. *The Life's manuscripts and their Sigla*

The texts of the *novella* and the *Life* were written around 1480–1482, almost forty years after the death of Brunelleschi, in 1446. Today, the *Life* is known through five manuscripts:

- (1) Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Magliabecchiano II, II, 325, (contemporary, also containing the *novella*, from now on referred to as M);
- (2) Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Magliabecchiano II, II, 326 (end of the eighteenth century, also containing the *novella*, from now on referred to as M1);

- (3) Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Nuovi Acquisti, 323 (second half of the sixteenth century, was originally conserved in Pisa, from now on referred to as P);
- (4) Accademia dei Lincei, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome, 455/35 (seventeenth or eighteenth century, from now on referred to as C);
- (5) Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence, Acquisti e doni 457 (sixteenth century, from now on referred to as L).

The debates about the authorship and manuscript tradition of the *Life of Brunelleschi* have always been closely connected.² Manetti's hand was already identified in M in the nineteenth century, since there are many signed documents by him that allow the collation.³ The question of authorship remained pending for almost another century, because Antonio Manetti was considered mainly a copyist. The first scholar to attribute the biography and the *novella* to Manetti was Gaetano Milanesi, in his 1887 edition of the *Life*, but such a suggestion was received with caution and even suspicion.⁴ Milanesi identified the author by comparing M to other manuscripts by Manetti, which actually did identify the copyist as the author.

The dispute was solved only in the 70s, when Manetti's authorship was confirmed through a series of articles by Giuliano Tanturli, and the publication of a new edition of the *Life* and the *novella* in 1976.⁵ From the moment that the attribution was verified, M was considered an autograph, as well as the most probable origin of the manuscript tradition.

The five manuscripts containing the *Life* present some variations, mainly due to transcription errors and interpretation difficulties. The most significant variation, however, is in the text copied in P, C and L. Those versions begin with the transcription of Brunelleschi's first project for the Florentine cathedral's dome, dating from 1420, and go beyond the point where M and

² Regarding the debate on authorship, see Moreni 1812, Milanesi 1887, Barbi 1893, Chiappelli 1896, Moschetti 1910, and Tanturli 1970.

³ For example the manuscript containing Manetti's *Huomini singolari in Firenze dal 1400 innanzi*, Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Conventi soppressi G.II.1501. Cf. Milanesi 1887, p. VIII–X.

⁴ Barbi 1893 and Chiappelli 1896.

⁵ Tanturli 1970, 1975; Manetti 1976.

M1 end, describing the architect's involvement with the reconstruction of the church of Santo Spirito. It is well known that M1 is a direct transcription of M, as the copyist himself confirms on the second leaf.

Regarding P, C and L, there is a consensus among scholars that they all derive from a common source, more specifically M.⁶ The discrepancy in the length of the text can be explained by a careful observation of the autograph. In it, the *Life* starts in the middle of a page, right after the end of the *novella*, *The Fat Woodcarver*, without any title or formal division between them. The transcription of the 1420 project, however, begins a page and presents a title ("Copia 1420"), which might have caused the identification of the beginning of the biography with this part. In a similar way, the sudden end of M coincides with the end of a page, which indicates that the next leaf, containing the rest of the text reproduced in P, C and L, was probably lost or simply fell from the manuscript, as De Robertis suggests.⁷ This theory is reinforced by the fact that the leaf following the biography in M is blank and was inserted at a later date, as Saalman demonstrates.⁸

2. *The biography: Authority and legacy*

Manetti had many contacts in important intellectual circles, such as the Neoplatonists of Careggi, particularly Marsilio Ficino,⁹ and dedicated himself mainly to copying texts for his personal library.¹⁰ He was interested in astronomy, mathematics, and mostly in Florentine literature, especially the work of Dante.¹¹ All of his intellectual activity has, in fact, a commemorative and

⁶ De Robertis in Manetti 1976, p. 148; Perrone in Manetti 1992.

⁷ De Robertis in Manetti 1976, p. 147.

⁸ Saalman in Manetti 1970, p. 3–32, p. 5.

⁹ On Ficino and the Platonic Academy see Field 1988, Kristeller 1943, 1979.

¹⁰ Regarding Manetti's relationship to the Neoplatonists, cf. Saalman in Manetti 1970, p. 18. On Ficino's connection to vernacular literature, see Kristeller 2005.

¹¹ Beside the *Divina Comedia*, Manetti copied the *Rime*, the *Convivio*, and also the Tuscan version of the *De Monarchia*, translated by Marsilio Ficino.

laudatory trait focused on his hometown. This tendency to glorify Florence also appears in his portrait of Brunelleschi.

The main goal of the biography, as the author himself states, is to ascribe the renovation of architecture in the early fifteenth century to Brunelleschi alone. The second goal, no less polarizing than the first, is to distinguish the master's hands from those of other architects who intervened in his projects and buildings, clearing Brunelleschi from the accusations of making 'mistakes' in his constructions, rehabilitating his fame and establishing his authority. Defining the essence of his art is the author's strategy to prove that Brunelleschi was superior to his contemporaries and detractors.

The theme of authority appears often in the biography. Manetti repeatedly states that it is necessary to make it clear to which point Brunelleschi was responsible for the final results of his buildings, so that the new generations do not repeat their mistakes by thinking that those errors are his. Talking about the supposed mistakes made by architect and woodcarver Antonio Manetti Ciaccheri at San Lorenzo church, after Brunelleschi's death, the biographer says:

[...] Luca della Robbia se ne doleva, quand'elle si feciono, che vedeva che lo faceva per detrarre alla fama di Filippo, stimandosi che chi aveva a venire si credessi che la fussi opera di Filippo come 'l resto; come si vede al presente in buona parte è intervenuto, e più sarà ne' secoli a venire.¹²

Manetti's declared intent of creating a defined and 'truthful' image of Brunelleschi's architecture, therefore, is related to the belief that his work was seen as an authoritative example by other architects, so they should only follow what was really created by his genius, and not later alterations by other artists. We read, however, many complaints from the author regarding the

¹² '[...] Luca della Robbia lamented when they were being done, as he saw that he made them in order to detract from Filippo's fame since whoever came there would think that, like the other things, it was Filippo's work. This we see has now taken place in large measure and will increase in centuries to come causing further grave damage to his reputation, since those who will build as they think he did will think they are working correctly'. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magliabecchiano II, II, 325, 310^v. The translation of this citation is taken from the English edition by Saalman in Manetti 1970, p. 110.

architecture of his own time. He writes '[...] questo modo de' muramenti che si dicono alla romana ed alla antica, a che molto vanamente si va oggi tanto dietro [...]',¹³ and criticizes that '[...] oggi non si attende se none a quello che pare risparmio, e mettevansi ciottoli di fiumi e mattoni crudi e ogni gagliofferia'.¹⁴

What these remarks show is that Brunelleschi's example was not being followed by the architects contemporary to Manetti. Apparently Brunelleschi had no great authority or influence over the late fifteenth century architecture in Italy in spite of his local success. And this picture did not change as time passed.

One can note, by analyzing the biography's legacy after Manetti, that even though the text was influential in subsequent artistic literature, it did not quite succeed in creating an actual artistic superiority for Brunelleschi. We do know, however, that Giorgio Vasari knew the biography and used it not only as a source of information, but also as a literary model in order to write his own biography of the architect for his *Lives of the most excellent painters, sculptors and architects*. Through him, Manetti's account influenced all later interpretations of Brunelleschi's works. But Vasari was quite unique in his appraisal of the architect's achievements. None of the other art theorists and writers of the period talked about either Manetti or Brunelleschi and for most of the non-Tuscan theorists of the Renaissance the first real modern architect was Donato Bramante.¹⁵

The *Life* actually had a very irregular fortune through the centuries. Since it was written for a friend of the author, identified in the text only as Girolamo, it was not officially published until the nineteenth century. Its existence only in manuscript form until then is probably one of the reasons it did not circulate very much during the sixteenth century.¹⁶ The fact that they

¹³ '[...] that manner of building, called *alla Romana* or *all'antica*, that is attempted so vainly today [...]'. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magliabechiano II, II, 325, 295^v.

¹⁴ '[...] today attention is paid only to what appears to be economical, and pebbles and raw bricks are employed, as well as all sorts of rubbish'. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magliabechiano II, II, 325, 307^v. English translation by the author.

¹⁵ Bozzoni 1980, p. 953.

¹⁶ Of the five known manuscript copies of the text, one is an autograph, which most likely was the model for the others. Regarding the manuscript

did not circulate much is apparent in the copies themselves, as one of the preserved copies of the text suggests that it circulated mostly in a very specific circle. The manuscript L, containing a transcription of the *Life*, as well as a transcription of Da Vinci's *Trattato della Pittura*, was copied by and belonged to the bibliophile Antonio d'Orazio da Sangallo (1551–1639), grandson of the great architect Antonio da Sangallo the Younger.¹⁷ It is probably not a coincidence that the famous painting representing five perspectivists (Brunelleschi and Antonio Manetti among them), now in the Louvre, once hung in the house of Giuliano da Sangallo, another architect from the family, according to Giorgio Vasari.¹⁸ As a Florentine dynasty of architects, the Sangallo family would have seen themselves as heirs of the local position Brunelleschi held during his time in the city.

Despite this restricted appreciation, Brunelleschi's image as an authority in architecture, as presented by Manetti and later by Vasari, quickly became the image of the local hero who pulls a great engineering feat (the Florentine cathedral's dome), but never achieves the status as a universal formal model for the future generations. On the contrary, Brunelleschi's authority was, at best, partial. The artist is seen mainly as a local celebrity rather than the 'inventor of modern architecture'. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this superficial image appears to be fully formed: Brunelleschi is the Florentine hero who built the cathedral's dome. The only exception in this period is the biography written by Filippo Baldinucci (1624–1697), significantly based on Manetti's text, which shows a renewed interest in the architect's varied works.

Despite the occasional use by the rare scholar, only in the nineteenth century was Manetti's *Life of Brunelleschi* truly rediscovered. The timing is significant since Italy was then in the process of unification and the desire to construct a national identity was intensely felt. In this new circumstance Brunelleschi would play an important role as a symbol of the Italian genius and

tradition the biography, cf. De Robertis & Tanturli in Manetti 1976, and Tanturli 1993.

¹⁷ About Antonio Di Orazio di Antonio da Sangallo see Marecchi Biagiarelli 1957.

¹⁸ Vasari 1986, vol. 1, p. 273.

resourcefulness.¹⁹ From a historiographical point of view, at this point Manetti's biography came to be considered as a privileged source, as it was almost contemporary to Brunelleschi.

But why was the *Life* not considered an important text during the centuries immediately following its composition? I believe that this fate can be ascribed to mainly two connected reasons: both the political and consequent cultural shift that resulted from the ascension of the Medici family in Florence.

3. *Brunelleschi and the last years of the Florentine Republic*

During Brunelleschi's lifetime (1377–1446), the oligarchical republican system reached both its peak and began its slow decline. Between 1378, after the revolt of the Ciompi, and 1434, year of the triumphant return of Cosimo de' Medici from exile, Florence was governed by a restricted group of families that occupied key positions in the city administration. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, this balance was already showing signs of crisis.²⁰

Brunelleschi's last years corresponded with the first years of the Medician régime. If we are to establish a connection between the way he is portrayed by Manetti and the political changes during the fifteenth century, it is interesting to know about Brunelleschi's own political tendencies. Any personal political views of the architect, however, are very difficult to track, since it was obviously complicated for an artist to express his personal preferences and risk alienating possible patrons.

We do know that Brunelleschi held many public offices in the republic, but most scholars simply tend to affirm his general alignment to the oligarchical powers in Florence.²¹ The Florentine oligarchy, nonetheless, consisted of different factions and family consortia. The only moment we see the architect involved in a direct political conflict is during the war with the city of Lucca. Brunelleschi got caught between Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Cosimo de' Medici, who were fighting for control

¹⁹ Acidini Luchinat 1980, p. 486.

²⁰ See Rubinstein 1968.

²¹ See, for example, Bruschi 2006, p. 11.

of the government. To make matters worse, the architect's plan to inundate Lucca by diverting the course of a river failed miserably, and resulted in the flood of the Florentine's military camp.²² For this failure Brunelleschi was much criticized, and contemporary sources often suggested that behind this disaster was either Albizzi or Medici, depending on the witness' political alignment. All we know is that he was never again elected for a position in any of the several magistracies of the Florentine administration, but the reason for this is not completely clear.²³ One of the few scholars who try to reflect on the architect's political tendencies is Eugenio Battisti.²⁴ Noting that Brunelleschi's most important commissions occurred during Albizzi's control of the government, between 1417 and *c.* 1430, he comes to the following conclusion: 'It can be presumed, though proof is lacking, that Brunelleschi is anti-Medicean'.²⁵

By the time Manetti was writing, in the last decades of the century, the Medici were openly and tightly holding the reins of the Florentine government. Many scholars have noted the author's polemical tone regarding the government and, more specifically, the Medici family in the text.²⁶ In fact we can trace some evidences indicating Manetti's opposition to the Medicean régime, at least in his later life. Consider the declared addressee of the *Life*, Girolamo, for example. Even though his last name is not mentioned, it likely refers to the poet Girolamo Benivieni.²⁷ One of the few manuscript copies of the text, P, belonged to a member of the Benivieni family. Girolamo also wrote a dialogue with Manetti as the main character: the *Dialogo di Antonio Manetti circa al sito, forma et misure dello Inferno di Dante Alighieri*. He was a close friend of the biographer and a zealous supporter of Savonarola and the *piagnone* movement.

²² On Brunelleschi's participation in the Lucca siege, see Begnini & Ruschi 1980.

²³ Cf. Zervas 1979.

²⁴ See also Parronchi 1965.

²⁵ Battisti 1981, p. 321.

²⁶ Cf. Saalman 1970, Tanturli 1975 and Tönnemann 1999.

²⁷ On Girolamo Benivieni, see Re 1906, Roush 2002 and Zorzi Pugliese 2003.

But the best way to perceive Antonio Manetti's feelings regarding the Medici family is by comparing Manetti's text with the later biography of Brunelleschi by Giorgio Vasari. Only then one is able to recognize the anti-Medicean bias of the *Life*.

As mentioned above, it is well known that Vasari used Manetti's *Life of Brunelleschi* in order to structure his own version. Many parts appear to be almost paraphrases of Manetti's text. Concerning the place of the architect in the history of art, both authors are in complete agreement. They both believe that Brunelleschi deserves the title of 'father of modern architecture', and emphasize his activity throughout the Italian peninsula to show his universal fame. At the same time, in both biographies Brunelleschi comes out as an artist who always had to fight for recognition.²⁸

Despite all similarities, however, there is one key difference between the authors: Vasari was closely linked to the Medici, and thus seized every opportunity in the narrative to glorify the family and to show how, unlike many contemporaries, they were able to recognize the architect's genius. Manetti, for his part, talks very little about the family, with the exception of the passage regarding the reconstruction of the church of San Lorenzo, in Florence. This particular case offers a unique perspective on Manetti's political views.

One of the most significant moments is the description of the construction and decoration of the old sacristy, in San Lorenzo's church. Manetti narrates how Brunelleschi made a revolutionary architectural project for Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, and how, after his death, his sons Cosimo and Lorenzo continued the building. An interesting element is the attribution of the whole commission to Giovanni de' Medici alone, when we know from other documents that it was Cosimo il Vecchio who decided to commission the reconstruction of the main chapel and the body of the church. Apparently, Manetti especially disliked Cosimo. He affirms, regarding the sacristy doors, that, at some point, 'E diterminatosi dipoi di bronzo e con figure, come al

²⁸ Vasari, for example, affirms that: '[...] la patria sua, [...] lo conobbe e lo stimò molto più morto che non fece vivo'. Vasari 1906, vol. II p. 383.

presente stanno, furono allagate a Donatello [...].²⁹ The sculptor, according to Manetti, was so proud of this commission that he made the doors without asking Brunelleschi's opinion. The result was very negative according to the *Life*. Brunelleschi was very reproachful and the two had an argument. It is obvious that someone chose to employ Donatello and accepted his work on the sacristy doors. Manetti does not cite his name, but it is quite clear that it was the new patron, Cosimo de' Medici. The criticisms on the sculptor would implicitly apply to him as well, and no contemporary reader would have missed that insinuation.³⁰

In Vasari's version, there is no hint of such disagreement or polemics. Brunelleschi and Donatello are simply mentioned as two great artists responsible for the sacristy. Cosimo, on the other hand, is described as a very committed patron, directly responsible for the results achieved by both artists:

Ed avendo preso per ispazzo questa opera ci stava quasi del continuo; e causò la sua sollecitudine, che Filippo fornì la sagrestia, e Donato fece gli stucchi, e così a quelle porticciuole l'ornamento di pietra e le porte di bronzo.³¹

An analysis of the original manuscript of the *Life*, the autograph M preserved at the National Library of Florence, also provides further information about Manetti's feelings towards the Medici. In a later revision, the biographer erased all the compliments and positive adjectives he had originally written next to the names of the members of the Medici family. The following examples reproduce some of the alterations:

- Giovanni ~~d'Averardo~~ de Medici, che si diceva di Bicci, huomo di ~~grandissima~~ reputazione e de' maggiori della città [...].³²

²⁹ 'Later when it was determined that [the doors of the sacristy] should be made of bronze and decorated with human figures, as they presently are, they were commissioned to Donatello [...].' Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magliabecchiano II, II, 325, 310^r. English translation by the author.

³⁰ Tönnemann 1999, p. 65.

³¹ 'And, since he took on this work for fun, he was continually involved in it; and because of his disposition Filippo completed the sacristy and Donato made the stucco and also the stone ornaments and bronze leaves for those little doors'. Vasari 1906, vol. 2, p. 370. English translation by the author.

³² 'Giovanni [d'Averardo] de Medici, called di Bicci, a man of [the greatest] reputation and one the most important men in town'. Firenze, Biblioteca

- E veduto Giovanni ~~huomo di gran gusto~~ le nuove e belle invenzioni di Filippo [...].³³
- Morì Giovanni de Medici e rimase Cosimo e Lorenzo suoi figlioli, ~~due spettabili e generosi cittadini~~ [...].³⁴

In other passages Manetti expresses a subtle criticism to the Florentine government in general. Regarding the work on the Palazzo di Parte Guelfa, he states:

Queste cose ho io dette, perché veggendosi pe' tempi avvenire, con l'autorità di Filippo credendosi che così fusse, non si facessi degli errori, né se ne scusassi. El quale edificio rimase indietro, parendo a chi governava la città che a tale magistrato fusse el meglio torre qualche cosa di riputazione che agiugnergliene. In su la quale sentenza s'è poi continuamente perseverato.³⁵

A more explicit critical tone appears in this passage, related to Brunelleschi's intention to change the orientation of the church of Santo Spirito:

Non parve a di quei potenti che erano in quel tempo, e pentironsene poi, ché furono leggieri cagioni perché non si fece, e gli è il vero che l'autorità conduce molte cose, ma alle volte ella ne guasta qualcuna.³⁶

Nazionale, Magliabecchiano II, II, 325, 308^v. The translation is taken from the English edition by Saalman in Manetti 1970, p. 102.

³³ 'Since Giovanni [a man of great taste], had seen Filippo's new and beautiful creations [...]'. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magliabecchiano II, II, 325, 308^v. The translation is taken from the English edition by Saalman in Manetti 1970, p. 104.

³⁴ 'Giovanni de Medici died and there remained his sons Cosimo and Lorenzo, [two respectable and generous citizens] [...]'. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magliabecchiano II, II, 325, 310^r. English translation by the author.

³⁵ 'I have related these things so that these errors may not be made or justified in the future by regarding them as made with the approval of Filippo. This building was not completed since the rulers of the city judged that it would be better to detract from the prestige of this organization rather than add to it. That judgment was consistently followed'. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magliabecchiano II, II, 325, 309^r. The translation is taken from the English edition by Saalman in Manetti 1970, p. 101–102.

³⁶ 'It did not appeal to some of the powerful men of that time. Later they regretted that because of unimportant motives it was not built this way. Authorities accomplish many things, it is true, but at times they ruin some of them'. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Nuovi Acquisti, 323, xlix r. This

Such strong and un-tempered opinions likely made a large circulation of the *Life* politically imprudent in Medicean Florence. But that is not the only element that contributed to the lack of popularity of Manetti's Brunelleschi. The author had one important affinity with the architect that also played a role in the *Life*'s fortune: his connection to Tuscan vernacular culture, the so-called *volgare*.

4. *Tuscan vernacular culture and republicanism*

Even though Antonio Manetti's Florence was very different from the one Brunelleschi knew, his own work as a copyist demonstrates that the biographer kept very much connected to this local tradition of *volgare* literature, which refers not only to a certain view of the Greek-Roman culture, but also to a republican³⁷ oligarchical model. It is not the concern of our study to discuss if Hans Baron's famous thesis, which connects the origin of a civic humanism with the war with Milan, is accurate or not, or if Machiavelli can really be seen as heir of a republican tradition.³⁸ What matters to us here is the perception that there is a relation between political thought and artistic culture, during the fifteenth century in Florence, and that a classical rhetoric was being used in political writings.

copy of the biography, originally from Pistoia and now preserved in Florence, contains a small part of the original text that was lost in the autograph manuscript by Manetti. Cf. De Robertis in Manetti 1976, p. 147. The translation is taken from the English edition by Saalman in Manetti 1970, p. 124.

³⁷ It is important to note, however, that the term 'republican', in the fifteenth century, had a very fluid meaning that might include the acceptance of imperialism, as well as mixed government solutions that, today, we might call parliamentary or even constitutional monarchies. For the debates on republicanism in the Renaissance, see Skinner 1978, Hankins 2000.

³⁸ Since Hans Baron first published his book *The Crisis of Early Italian Renaissance* (1955), many studies have been written reflecting on the concept of civic Humanism and its value for understanding Renaissance Florence. One of the sharpest critics of Baron's thesis was Siegel 1966. Also Garin 1993 reflected on the supposed relationship between humanist culture and civic life. More recently, the collection of essays edited by Hankins 2000, was important for tracing the limits and dilemmas suggested by the concept of civic humanism. Nauert 2006 provides a very lucid and complete overview of the debate on Italian humanism.

It is important to highlight that the interest in classical culture associated with a civic discourse did not develop only in academic spheres or in the Greek and Latin studies, but also in the popular circles that promoted the vernacular language. Classical ideas and themes spread through literary genres deeply associated with a late medieval culture, such as the *novella*. For those enthusiasts, the vernacular works of Petrarch, Boccaccio and especially Dante, were considered symbols of the cultural renovation of the Renaissance.³⁹

Both Brunelleschi and Manetti had a great enthusiasm for the local Florentine language and had many friends among poets and writers. Brunelleschi himself wrote poems and probably collaborated in a *novella*, called *Geta e Birria*, loosely based on Plautus' *Amphitryon*.⁴⁰ Manetti, on the other hand, dedicated all his writings to Florentine personalities, as a means of celebrating the republic.⁴¹

Those affinities also imply a particular view of art and architecture: they should benefit the whole city and not only a few citizens. Architects, in particular, often shared the political rhetoric inspired by classical culture. The architect was seen – and generally saw himself – as an artist whose task was to organize space, public or private, thus creating the best framework for life in society. All the theoretical debates on the concept of the ideal city, for example, clearly show the civic concerns that characterized the profession during the fifteenth century.⁴² In this context, it is important to highlight that Antonio Manetti was also known as someone familiar with the art of building, since he took part, as '*civis et architectus*', in a commission regarding the competitive bid for the façade of Santa Maria del Fiore, in 1491.⁴³

³⁹ On the humanistic culture of the early Renaissance and its relation to vernacular literature and civic values, see Bec 1980, and Befani Canfield 1984, Dionisotti 1967 and 2003.

⁴⁰ Tanturli 1980, p. 127.

⁴¹ All of his prose writings are dedicated to biographies of illustrious Florentine men. Beside the *Novella* and the *Vita*, Manetti wrote *Notizia di Guido Cavalcanti*, and *Huomini singhularii in Firenze dal MCCCC innanzi*.

⁴² For the debate on the Renaissance ideal city, see Garin 1965, Firpo 1987, Sciolla 1987, Verdon 1996, Calanchi & Morisco 2004.

⁴³ The document, conserved by the Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo, is transcribed by Milanesi in Vasari 1906, vol. IV, p. 305.

So it comes as no surprise that, according to the *Life*, the architect's most important works were done to collective patrons or to Florence's public administration, like churches and fortresses.

In Manetti's biography, Brunelleschi's views of beauty and greatness were usually destined for civic purposes. It is well known, though, that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there was a gradual change from a communal to a court culture, and the Florentine *volgare* became a sophisticated and institutionalized discipline, absorbed by the Medici court.⁴⁴

In this context, the *Life* projected an image of the architect that did not quite correspond to this new political and cultural situation. Brunelleschi is described as someone who would not hesitate to criticize others, even his own patrons. The narrative also gives the impression that he was not particularly willing to satisfy his client's specific requests, but preferred to do things as he saw fit, for the general good. Manetti says, for example, that the architect unwillingly agreed to build the church of San Lorenzo with only three naves. It seemed a poor solution to him, as the city deserved a grander church.⁴⁵ Moreover, Manetti's tone is often nostalgic, which suggests that the biographer probably saw Brunelleschi as a symbol of a lost Florence. To confirm this assumption it suffices to remember the criticisms regarding the architects of his own time, mentioned earlier.

Giorgio Vasari, despite making a great effort to establish a close connection to the Medici family, also shows the architect as someone 'difficult' to deal with, in his biography. According to him, Brunelleschi would have torn to pieces a palace design he had made for Cosimo de' Medici, because he felt offended when the patron decided not to build it.⁴⁶ In Vasari's *Vita*, however, his arrogance is connected to his genius, to the fact that he was supposedly ahead of his time, and not to his political culture. The obstinate personality of artists is an important element in Vasari's *Lives*, and actually becomes a precedent for a much

⁴⁴ See, for example Chastel 1982, and Plaisance 2004.

⁴⁵ Manetti, *Vita di Brunelleschi*. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magliabechiano II, II, 325, 309^v.

⁴⁶ Vasari-Milanesi 1906, vol. II, p. 371–372.

more turbulent artist: Michelangelo.⁴⁷ Manetti, instead, connects Brunelleschi to the past, to the cultural references of the late *Trecento* and early *Quattrocento*. And Brunelleschi's Florentine *volgare* culture, as his first biographer conceived it, was intimately connected to the idea of an oligarchic republic.

In conclusion, Manetti built his Brunelleschi based on a nostalgic idea of the architect's time. He also implied an association of the culture of the early Renaissance in Florence with a republican ideal. These values, as demonstrated by several studies, are not completely new in the fifteenth century and were already present in the communal period, but it is exactly this continuity that explains how Manetti had a nostalgic view of Brunelleschi's time.

We can say that Antonio Manetti's attempt to impose Filippo as a universal artistic authority fails exactly because of that political-cultural affinity, that is, the implicit association between Brunelleschi and the rhetoric of republican Florence, which was in clear decline as the Medici were succeeding at creating a powerful and governing image for themselves.

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⁴⁷ Ray 1980, p. 381.

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Abstract

The *Life of Filippo Brunelleschi* by Antonio Manetti constitutes a principle resource for the study of Renaissance art. Much has been written about its reliability as a primary source, its literary origins and authorship. Little has been done, however, to understand Manetti's motivations in constructing a heroic and authoritative image for Brunelleschi, and to evaluate its effectiveness in this regard.

When analyzing the biography's critical legacy, one can note that even though the text was influential in the later artistic literature, it didn't quite succeed in creating an artistic superiority for Brunelleschi. His image as an authority quickly becomes that of the local hero who pulls a great engineering feat, but doesn't achieve unanimity as a model for the next generations.

I seek to investigate Manetti's motivations to create an artistic authority and why he fails to achieve his goal. I argue that the choice of Brunelleschi as a biographical subject is not fortuitous, but indicates a personal and cultural affinity with the artist. Manetti's attempt fails exactly because of that affinity, that is, the implicit association between Brunelleschi and the tradition of the communal Florence, which was in decline as the Medici were achieving political success. Manetti maintained a connection to this local communal tradition evident in his work, showing resistance to the new regime.

